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LEADERS

OF

PUBLIC OPINION IN IRELAND

VOL. II.

HENRY FLOOD. HENRY GRATTAN

WORKS BY THE

RT. HON. WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY.

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LEADERS

OF

PUBLIC OPINION IN IRELAND

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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LEADERS OF PUBLIC OPINION IN IRELAND

DANIEL O'CONNELL

While the Union was under discussion in the Irish Parliament no class of persons exerted themselves more energetically in opposing it than the Dublin lawyers. Among the meetings held for this purpose there was one which assumed a peculiar significance from its being composed entirely of Roman Catholics. They assembled to protest against the assertion that the Roman Catholics, as a body, were favourable to the measure; to express their opinion that it would exercise an injurious influence upon the struggle for emancipation; and to declare that, were it otherwise, they did not desire to purchase that boon at the expense of the independence of the nation. Military law was then reigning, and a body of troops, under Major Sirr, were present at the Exchange to watch the proceedings. It was under these rather trying circumstances that a young lawyer, 'trembling,' as he afterwards said, 'at the sound of his own voice,' rose to make his maiden speech. He delivered a short address against the Union, which, if it contained no very original or striking views, had at least the merit of exhibiting the common arguments in a clear and convincing light; and he shortly after hurried to a newspaper office to deposit a copy for publication. This young lawyer was Daniel

O'Connell, the great Irish agitator. I confess that it is not without some hesitation that I approach this part of my subject, for the difficulty of painting the character of O'Connell with fairness and impartiality can hardly be exaggerated. 'Never, perhaps,' as has been said, 'was there a man at once so hated and so loved;' and it may be doubted whether any public man of his time was the object of so much extravagant praise and blame. On the whole, however, the latter greatly preponderates. For many years almost the entire press of England, and a large section of that of Ireland, ceaselessly denounced him. No English political party cordially liked him, and in Parliament he had to bear alone the assaults of statesmen and orators of the most varied opinions. By the more violent Irish Protestants he was regarded with feelings of mingled hatred and terror that almost amounted to a superstition; and the failure of the last great struggle of his life, and the disastrous condition of the country at the time of his death, have been very injurious to his reputation.

Daniel O'Connell was born in the county of Kerry in the year 1775. His family was one which had for a long time occupied a considerable position among the Catholics of the county, which was noted for its national and Catholic feeling, and, it must be added, greatly addicted to smuggling. It was in after years remarked as a curious coincidence that its crest bore the proud motto 'Oculus O'Connell Salus Hiberniæ.' During his boyhood the penal laws were still for the most part unrepealed, though much relaxed in their stringency, and the poorer Roman Catholics were sunk in that state of degradation which compulsory ignorance necessarily produces, while the richer drew their opinions, with their education, from France. After a short period at a school at Cork O'Connell spent about a year and a

half at St. Omer, where he rose to the first class and gained several premiums, and where the principal predicted that he would afterwards distinguish himself, and he then remained for a few months at the English college at Douay. The Revolution had at this time shattered the French Church and Crown, and the minds of all men were violently agitated in its favour or against it. O'Connell was strongly hostile. Like the members of most Irish families that had adhered to their religion during the penal laws, he was deeply attached to it, politically and through feelings of honour, if not from higher motives. The associations of his college were necessarily clerical; and some of the revolutionary soldiers, in passing through Douay, had heaped many insults on the students.

On his return to Ireland he formed a friendship with some of the United Irishmen, with whose ostensible object of procuring Catholic Emancipation he naturally sympathised, and he was actually enrolled in the body. There is, however, no good reason to believe that he was involved in their illegal conspiracies, and to the end of his life he spoke with detestation and contempt of the rebellion of 1798. It was in this year that he was called to the Bar, and when a few years later Emmet's rebellion broke out he became a member of a yeomanry corps which the lawyers had formed. He was at that time, as he afterwards confessed, 'almost a Tory.' In 1798 he went through a dangerous illness, and he has himself related that when he believed he was dying he repeated to himself those fine lines in 'Douglas':

> Unknown I die. No tongue shall speak of me;
> Some noble spirits judging by themselves
> May yet conjecture what I might have proved,
> And think life only wanting to my fame.

One lesson which O'Connell learnt from the rebellion and its sequels was never forgotten. It was an utter disbelief in the use of physical force in Irish politics; a distrust of all secret and illegal conspiracy; an extreme dread of the spirit and tendencies of the French Revolution. No one spoke with more absolute contempt of the secret plottings of the United Irishmen or of the crazy rebellion of Robert Emmet.

His foreign education, and especially his command of the French language, helped him considerably in later life when he had come to be regarded by great bodies of his co-religionists on the Continent as the foremost champion of his Church, and when his career had in consequence assumed something of a cosmopolitan aspect. It certainly did not prevent him from remaining the most typical of Irishmen, yet even in his manner some slight trace of his French education might be occasionally detected. The late Lady Stanley of Alderley—a singularly acute judge of men—once described to me O'Connell as she knew him on the rare occasions when he appeared in general English society—graceful, courteous, modestly retiring, and in his demeanour towards ladies extremely, but according to English notions somewhat too elaborately, deferential. 'It was exactly,' she said, 'the manner of a French abbé.'

His family, like a large number of the old Catholic gentry of Ireland, were of the strongest type of an old-world Toryism. Shut out from all public affairs in their own country, they lived retired country lives in which farming, sporting, smuggling, and the cattle fairs of Limerick and Tralee played the leading part. They were surrounded by a wild, Irish-speaking tenantry, who looked up to them with much the same feelings as a Highland clan to its chief, and their wider

sympathies were chiefly with the interests of the Church and of the old monarchies of the Continent in whose armies they had been largely represented. Their ideas were those of the *Ancien Régime*, and both politically and religiously they looked with horror on the Revolution. A namesake and uncle of Daniel O'Connell had passed the greater part of a long life in the Irish Brigade in the French service, had distinguished himself on many battlefields, and when the Revolution broke out had been one of those who followed the fortunes of the exiled princes. He took a large part in the negotiations which ended by re-forming the old Irish Brigade under the British flag; when the wars of the Revolution were terminated he re-entered the French service under the government of the Restoration, but, true to his Legitimist sentiments, he refused to take the oath of fidelity to Louis Philippe after the Revolution of 1830. His curious and checkered life has lately been written, and throws much light on the family history of the O'Connells. It shows that while the old general naturally sympathised with the action of his nephew in obtaining Catholic emancipation, he utterly disliked his democratic tendencies, regarded his project of repealing the Union as ruinous folly, and cordially approved of any amount of exceptional and coercive legislation in Ireland that was really necessary to enforce obedience to the law. At the time of the Union Kerry was one of the counties that were in favour of that measure. The Knight of Kerry, who was one of its representatives, belonged to a family who had long been hereditary friends of the O'Connells. He was a warm advocate of the Union, and declares that it was popular 'among the gentry of both persuasions and the Roman Catholic population of Munster and Connaught.' 'Having accepted office,' he says, 'as a sup-

porter of the Union, I went to two elections pending the measure, and was returned without opposition in a county where the Roman Catholic interest greatly preponderated, and a declaration almost unanimous in favour of the Union proceeded from the county of Kerry.' He adds, 'One of my most strenuous supporters in bringing forward that declaration was Mr. Maurice O'Connell—a gentleman of wealth, respectability, and decided loyalty, uncle of Mr. Daniel O'Connell; and my most active partisan on the occasion was Mr. John O'Connell, brother of Mr. Daniel O'Connell.'[1]

The subject of this biography took from the first a very different line, and he soon showed himself capable of acting with equal power both in the sphere of his own profession and in that of political life. With all the impulsiveness, the quickness, the tact, and the versatility of the Celtic temperament, O'Connell combined most eminently other qualities which are more commonly associated with the Teutonic type—the power of long, plodding, and concentrated work—a steady ambition, never losing sight of its aim; a firm, practical grasp of the realities of things. Few men have had a greater capacity for work. During long years he was habitually in his study before sunrise, while his days were spent in incessant practice in the courts, and most of his evenings in political meetings. The comparatively simple conditions of Irish property and the nature of the cases that most frequently come before Irish law courts are not favourable to the formation of a school of great technical lawyers like those whose decisions are quoted as guiding lights in the more abstruse branches of English law, and it is not probable that O'Connell under any circumstances would have taken

[1] *A Letter to Sir R. Peel on the Endowment of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland*, by the Knight of Kerry (1845), p. 10.

his place among them; but the most competent judges in England as well as in Ireland recognised in him an eminently sound and well-informed lawyer, excellently instructed in the theory as well as in the practice of the law; a consummate master of its evasive subtleties, and at the same time a man whose dispassionate opinion on any legal question was entitled to great weight. Behind the noisier, more brilliant and more popular aspects of his character this basis of solid attainments always remained.

It was, however, as an advocate, and especially as a criminal advocate, that he was most distinguished, and he had every quality that would place him in the first rank in a country like Ireland, where the administration of justice could never be carried on in quite the same spirit as in England. In England, with the rarest exceptions, public opinion in all classes is on the side of the law, and all classes desire the detection, conviction, and punishment of criminals. In Ireland great departments of crime are thoroughly organised; looked upon as of the nature of war; supported by the whole force of popular opinion; screened from punishment by the most deliberate perjury or the most savage and systematic intimidation of witnesses. The frequent impossibility of obtaining convictions in a disturbed county for certain classes of crime in spite of the clearest evidence; the extreme difficulty of obtaining evidence even when crimes are committed in open daylight and to the knowledge of numbers; the numerous cases of the murder of witnesses, or even of the families of witnesses; the great sums which Governments have been compelled to pay in order to transport honest witnesses or their families beyond the range of popular vengeance, are all signs of a diseased community in which the normal methods of administering

justice often fail to work. It has in consequence been found necessary to combat crime by far more stringent measures than would be required in England. Suspensions of the Habeas Corpus Act, insurrection Acts of great severity, frequent change of venue, and careful selection of jurymen have all been necessary. Not only prosecuting counsel, but even judges, have constantly adopted a tone, in enforcing the guilt of criminals upon juries, which would hardly have been tolerated in England; and in the absence through fear or sympathy of more respectable witnesses, paid informers, often of the most disreputable character, and criminals seeking as King's evidence to escape punishment, have played a great part. Even in ordinary cases the Irish witness, with his cunning, his dexterity of fence, his dislike to simple and straightforward answers, his picturesque, diffuse, evasive phraseology, often gives an Irish trial an appearance which is very strange to an English eye; and to all this we must add the intense political and religious passion that has been constantly imported into Irish courts, and the power which appeals to such passions have often had upon witnesses and juries.

In this stormy atmosphere O'Connell was supreme. His great power of popular eloquence; his quickness in seizing opportunities and reading character and judging situations; his complete and intuitive knowledge of every turn and cranny of an Irish nature made him almost unrivalled. He could touch with equal skill the chords of sympathy, prejudice, or fear. He was supremely great as a cross-examiner—laying subtle traps for untruthful or unskilful or timid or exaggerating witnesses, wheedling and flattering till he had gained their confidence; browbeating with tremendous violence; detecting with an eagle eye every evasion or

inconsistency. He was absolutely fearless, and no advocate ever took a more commanding and sometimes a more insolent tone in dealing with a hostile judge, while his invective knew no bounds, and there was no passion and no prejudice to which he would not appeal if he thought it in the interests of his client. He came soon to be looked upon by the criminal classes with an almost superstitious reverence as the one man who could save them from conviction.

Many anecdotes are told of his skill in reading character. On one occasion the trial of a man whom O'Connell well knew to be guilty of an offence which was then capital, had passed into the hands of a serjeant-at-law who had as yet but little experience of such cases. He was an excellent lawyer and in later years a great judge, but a man of very sensitive and scrupulous character, rendered doubly nervous by the fact that he was trying a case on which a human life depended. O'Connell at once put some plainly illegal questions, and, when the judge very properly stopped him, he again and again pursued the same course. Then, with well-simulated rage, he dashed his brief to the ground, declared that the blood of his client would be on the head of the judge who refused to permit his defence, and stalked majestically out of the court. The result was what he anticipated. The judge himself acted as counsel for the undefended prisoner, cross-examined the witnesses against him with great severity, and charged in such a manner that an acquittal was the result.

In another case, when it was a question whether a will had been signed by a conscious testator, or whether, as was suspected, the pen had been put into a dead man's hand to trace the signature, he observed that the principal witness, under severe and repeated cross-

examination, always returned to the same phrase, 'there was life in him.' 'By virtue of your oath,' said O'Connell, 'did you not put a fly into the dead man's mouth, in order that you might swear that there was life in him?' He had guessed rightly, and the witness, pale with terror, confessed his crime.

On another occasion he had to defend a vituperative journalist, who had often bitterly attacked the Corporation of Cork, from a charge of assault, resting on the fact that in a rush from a theatre he had broken a rib of the high sheriff. There seemed no clear evidence of deliberation or intention; but O'Connell knew, or suspected, that the jury were strongly prejudiced against his client. He asked, in a careless tone, a few questions, bringing out the fact that the affair might easily have been an accident; but when it came to his turn to speak on behalf of his client, he said he did not feel inclined to make a speech, but would content himself with telling a story. He then related in detail, and with much humour, a murder case which he said he had once witnessed at the Clonmel Assizes. A man was charged with the murder of his neighbour. An ancient feud subsisted between them, and the prisoner had more than once used violence against the man he was accused of murdering, had been heard vowing vengeance against him, and had been seen following him on the very road where he was found murdered. The victim's face was so beaten in by a stone that he could only be identified by his dress. The chain of circumstantial evidence seemed complete and the conviction of the prisoner inevitable, when he called a single witness—the very man who was alleged to have been murdered. It turned out that another man had that night been murdered. The identification by dress failed owing to the similarity of the dress worn by the

Tipperary peasantry. The presumed victim had received a hint that he was about to be arrested for a Whiteboy offence, and had fled from justice; but, on hearing that his ancient enemy was being tried for his life on account of him, he chivalrously returned. The judge said that in so clear a case it was needless for him to charge, when, to his great surprise, the jury asked leave to retire, and to his still greater surprise they returned with a verdict of 'Guilty.' 'Good God!' exclaimed the judge, 'of what is he guilty—surely not of murder?' 'No, my lord,' replied the foreman, 'but he stole my grey mare three years ago.' The story was told with infinite dramatic skill, and the jury were convulsed with laughter, when O'Connell continued in another tone: 'So, gentlemen of the jury, if Mr. Boyle did not wilfully assault the sheriff, he has libelled the corporation. Find him guilty by all means.' It is not surprising that a verdict of acquittal speedily followed.

Other stories were told of the craft with which he surprised witnesses who were substantially truthful into some exaggerated statement, or some contradiction in evidence, which procured a most unexpected acquittal. He could avail himself with extraordinary skill of legal subtleties, and sometimes most successfully mystified ignorant judges. On one occasion, as he himself boasts, he induced a judge to charge for the acquittal of a client who had stolen goats, on the strength of an old statute which empowered the owners of cornfields, gardens, or plantations to destroy all goats trespassing upon them, from which he argued that goats were not property.[1] At a time when counsel for prisoners were not allowed to address the jury it was noticed that

[1] O'Neill Daunt's *Personal Recollections of O'Connell*, ii. p. 43.

O'Connell had a rare skill in raising side issues or putting illegal questions, and in defending their legality, throwing in short interjectional remarks as a kind of 'aside' to the jury, which had often a great effect. It was noticed also that, while he sometimes assumed a careless manner and sometimes the manner of a man who was acting under ungovernable impulses, he never in conducting a case really lost his presence of mind; that he was one of the safest and most cautious of advocates; that he was one of the best men of business who ever appeared at the Irish Bar, mastering details with a rare quickness and accuracy; and that he had always the great merit of forgetting himself in the interest of his client, and never allowing any personal desire for display to tempt him into a course that might be dangerous to his client.[1] He probably saved from the gallows some who might otherwise have been hanged on inconclusive or prejudiced evidence, as well as many of whose guilt there was no reasonable doubt. His infinite humour, his buoyant spirits, his indefatigable devotion to the cause of his clients, and many acts of magnanimity shown to young and inexperienced counsel, seem to have made him popular at the Bar, in spite of the outrageous violence with which he constantly attacked those who were at any time his opponents, and of the domineering insolence he so often displayed in conducting a case. Though a very unscrupulous, he was essentially a very kindly man, one of the most delightful of companions, and there was a contagious charm in his high animal spirits, in the ceaseless flow of his anecdotes and jests. 'He laughed,' it was said, 'in every inch of his body.'

[1] Some excellent remarks on O'Connell's legal qualities will be found in Maddyn's *Ireland and her Rulers*, and in Phillips' *Recollections*.

O'Connell always defended the excessive violence of his language, both at the Bar and on the platform, on the ground of the peculiar position of the Roman Catholics. He said that he had found his co-religionists as broken in spirit as they were in fortune; that they had adopted the tone of the weakest mendicants; that they seemed ever fearful of wearying the dominant caste by their importunity, and that they were utterly unmindful of their powers and of their rights. His most difficult task was to persuade them of their strength, and to teach them to regard themselves as the equals of their fellow-countrymen. The easiest way of breaking the spell was to adopt a defiant and an overbearing tone. The spectacle of a Roman Catholic fearlessly assailing the highest in the land with the fiercest invective and the most unceremonious ridicule was eminently calculated to invigorate a cowering people. A tone of extreme violence was the best corrective for a spirit of extreme servility.

This apology may be taken for what it is worth. It is, however, quite true that to a Catholic lawyer of great abilities and great industry, the condition of the Irish law courts must at this time have been intolerably galling. To his Protestant competitors the course was fully open. O'Connell could not even assume the silk gown of a King's Counsel, and all the great prizes of his profession were withheld from him. Nor was this all. Nearly every important and influential post was in the hands of men who were bitterly hostile to his co-religionists, and in the great majority of cases their appointments were largely due to their politics. After the long series of corrupt appointments that grew out of the Union struggle, came a period of Tory and anti-Catholic government which lasted, with very short intervals, for a quarter of a century. Lord Manners—

a feeble lawyer, but a strong anti-Catholic—held the great position of Chancellor for no less than twenty years. Lord Norbury, whose buffooneries on the Bench had no parallel in England since the seventeenth century, held the great position of Chief Justice of Common Pleas for a still longer period, and he retained it some time after his faculties had manifestly declined. The man, however, who had the most influence not merely over legal patronage, but also in the practical administration of Ireland, was Saurin, the Attorney-General. For fifteen years he had, as Lord Wellesley said, virtually governed Ireland. He was a descendant of an old and distinguished Huguenot family, and inherited in full measure the anti-Catholic sentiments of his ancestors. He was an excellent lawyer, a man of high personal character, of indomitable strength of will and of talents which, though not brilliant, were eminently solid. The position he had long held in his profession is sufficiently attested by the fact that he had been selected by the Dublin lawyers as their chairman when they met together to oppose the Union, and his speeches against that measure are among the most weighty that were delivered in the Irish Parliament. His dread, however, of a possible Catholic ascendency led him on more than one occasion to unduly strain his powers, and O'Connell recognised in him the bitterest and most dangerous opponent of his co-religionists.

In 1813, a journalist named Magee, who had written a violent attack on the government of the Duke of Richmond, was prosecuted by Saurin for libel. O'Connell was counsel to Magee, and, seeing at once that it was hopeless to expect a verdict for his client, he delivered a long speech of extraordinary eloquence and passion, but also of the most unbridled and extravagant violence, supporting his client's denunciation of the

government of Ireland, and inveighing in terms that had hardly ever been heard in a law court against the Attorney-General. He accused him of having packed the jury with inveterate enemies of the Catholics, and he told the jury so to their faces. He described Saurin's speech as 'violent and virulent; a confused and disjointed tissue of bigotry amalgamated with congenial vulgarity.' He accused him of being the prime mover and instigator of all the rash and silly and irritating measures that had in the last years afflicted and distracted Ireland. He retorted his charges against the Catholic Board by declaring that any man who dared to charge the Catholic body or Catholic Board, or any individuals of the Board, with sedition or treason was 'an infamous and profligate liar,' and he gave striking instances of calumnies against the Catholics which had appeared, unpunished and uncondemned, in a newspaper supported by the Government. The judge vainly tried to bring back the discussion to orderly limits. The jury, as O'Connell anticipated, gave a verdict against Magee; but before he was brought up for judgment he published this speech as a separate pamphlet, and adopted and emphasised its sentiments.

Saurin took the step—which was surely under the circumstances at least injudicious—of setting forth this publication as an aggravation of the original offence, and in addressing the Court on the subject he used language which appears to have stung O'Connell almost to madness. In his reply O'Connell declared that it was only his respect for the law court that enabled him to listen patiently to an attack 'which, had it been made elsewhere, would have met merited chastisement, and he proceeded, under the thin disguise of an imaginary character, to describe his opponent as 'a creature narrow-minded, mean, calumnious, of inveterate big-

otry and dastard disposition, who prosecutes with virulence and malignity and delights in punishment . . . . a man who with shameless falsehood brings sweeping charges against the population of the land, and afterwards meanly retracts and denies them; without a particle of manliness or manhood . . . . speaking with the bigoted virulence and dastard malignity of an ancient and irritated female.' There was much more in the same strain, and it ended in the condemnation of Magee to two years' imprisonment.

Some years later an incident which was creditable to no party revived the antagonism. A private letter —written, it is said, nine years before—of Saurin to Lord Norbury was picked up or stolen, which contained matter that certainly ought not to have been written by an Attorney-General to a Chief Justice. It contained a copy of a letter from Lord Rosse to Saurin, to the effect that when Lord Norbury went on circuit, as he was accustomed to talk much with the county members and other leading country gentlemen, it would be desirable that he should make use of the occasion to impress upon them the advisability of using their influence and votes in opposition to the Catholic cause. 'If you will judiciously administer a little of this medicine,' wrote Saurin, 'to the King's County or any other members of Parliament that may fall in your way, you will deserve well.'[1]

This confidential and stolen letter was brought to O'Connell, who placed it in the hands of the Secretary of the Catholic Association, and desired a meeting to be at once held with a view of either petitioning Parliament or instituting a prosecution against Saurin on the charge of attempting to corrupt a judge and per-

[1] See Fitzpatrick's *Correspondence of O'Connell*, i. 80–83 ; *One Year of the Administration of Lord Wellesley* (1823), p. 59–60.

vert the administration of justice. He wrote formally to Plunket, who was then Attorney-General, bringing the letter before him and calling upon him to institute such a prosecution. Plunket, however, absolutely refused to take any steps grounded on a private letter obtained in the manner that has been described. O'Connell then induced Brougham to bring the letter before the House of Commons. He gained, however, nothing by the step. Peel answered that he would rather be the writer than the man who, having found the letter, made so base a use of it. Brougham, when the circumstances under which the letter was obtained were fully known to him, refused to take any further part in the matter, and the House was evidently of his opinion.

Quarrels at the Bar and questions of legal patronage play a large part in the life and in the correspondence of O'Connell, but it is here sufficient to say that his own position as a practising lawyer was of the highest. He had competitors of very remarkable ability. Plunket was one of the greatest orators who have ever lived, and though his somewhat hard and metallic nature, and his distaste for political life deprived him of the influence and popularity which his transcendent talent might have given him, his ascendency at the Bar on his own subjects was almost undisputed. Bushe could address a jury with a persuasive charm that no rival could surpass, and certainly with a far purer taste than O'Connell ever displayed. There were other lawyers of his later day, among them his bitter enemy Blackburne, who were probably the equals of O'Connell in legal knowledge and who encountered him with indomitable courage in many fields. But in the range and versatility of his gifts O'Connell had no superior, and as the defender in criminal cases he had no equal at the Irish

Bar. As early as 1812 his business on circuit exceeded that of any other lawyer and was almost beyond his power, and he was soon able to boast that he had 'certainly as large, probably a larger, professional income than any man in a stuff gown ever had at the Irish Bar.' When he finally relinquished practice to devote himself to political agitation his professional income had reached 8,000*l.* or 9,000*l.* a year—a sum which may appear moderate to a modern English lawyer, but which was probably surpassed by no lawyer at that time practising at the Irish Bar.

The Roman Catholics had made some inconsiderable efforts to influence public opinion by a society for the purpose of preparing petitions for Parliament, and of this society he soon became the life. His extraordinary ability and extraordinary industry outweighed all the advantages of rank and old services that were sometimes opposed to his views. There is much reason to believe that from a very early period of his career he conceived the scheme of policy which he pursued through life with little deviation, and, it must be added, with little scruple. This scheme was to create and lead a public spirit among the Roman Catholics; to wrest emancipation by its pressure from the Government; to perpetuate the agitation thus created till the Irish Parliament had been restored; to disendow the Established Church; and to open in Ireland a new era, with a separate and independent Parliament and perfect religious equality.

It would be difficult to conceive a more daring scheme of policy. The Roman Catholics had hitherto shown themselves absolutely incompetent to take any decisive part in politics. They were not, it is true, quite as prostrate as they had been when Swift so contemptuously described them as being 'altogether as in-

considerable as the women and children . . . . without leaders, without discipline, without natural courage, little better than hewers of wood and drawers of water, and out of all capacity of doing any mischief if they were ever so well inclined;' but yet the iron of the penal laws had entered into their souls, and they had always thrown themselves helplessly on Protestant leaders. Grattan, it is true, was now in the decline of life; but Plunket, who was still in the zenith of his great powers, was ready to succeed him. If the Roman Catholics could be braced up to independent exertion the noblemen and men of property in their ranks would be their natural leaders, and, at all events, a young lawyer, dependent on his talents and excluded from Parliament and from the higher ranks of his profession, would seem very unfitted for such a position. O'Connell, however, perceived that it was possible to bring the whole mass of the people into the struggle, and to give them an almost unexampled momentum and unanimity by applying to politics a great power that lay dormant in Ireland—the power of the Catholic priesthood. To make the priests the rulers of the country, and himself the ruler of the priests, was his first great object.

It was in 1808 that he first rose to a commanding position in the Catholic Committee. A profound and very natural depression had at this time fallen upon the Catholic body. The deep disappointment which had followed the abandonment of their cause after the Union had been for a short time and in some degree dispelled when Fox and Grenville rose to power, and the Catholics had consented at the request of the English statesmen to abstain from petitioning for emancipation lest they should embarrass their friends. But the defeat of Grenville in his efforts to procure the

small amount of justice of placing Catholics in the army in England on a level with those in Ireland, and to abolish at the same time the few restrictions on their promotion that remained; the violent opposition shown by the King to all concessions, and the general election which followed in which the No Popery cry had completely triumphed in the English constituencies, again dashed their hopes to the ground. Keogh, who had been the chief leader of the Catholic party in the struggle of 1792 and 1793, and who, though now an old and infirm man, still exercised a great influence upon their counsels, was of opinion that the proper course for the Catholics to pursue was to maintain a 'dignified silence,' and abstain for the present from petitioning or agitating. With this party O'Connell successfully grappled. His advice on every occasion was 'agitate, agitate, agitate,' and he carried with him the majority of the Committee. Keogh appears from this time to have altogether retired from active participation in the movement, and O'Connell became its dominating influence.

The division on the question of the veto immensely strengthened his position. I have traced in the life of Grattan the leading features of that controversy, and there can be no doubt that if Catholic emancipation had been carried, as it ought to have been, in the quiet years that followed the Union, it would have been accompanied by the payment of the priests and by a serious Government control over the appointment of bishops. The bishops had formally consented to these measures; the Court of Rome was fully prepared to accede to them, and the Catholics were still under the guidance of men of the most moderate type. In the sudden revulsion of clerical opinion on this question O'Connell bore a leading part, and the determination of the bishops to refuse such terms at once divided the

Catholic body, brought the sacerdotal element into a greatly increased prominence in Catholic politics, and placed O'Connell in the position of leader of the popular party. The struggle lasted for many years and with various fortunes. The obstacles to be encountered by O'Connell were very great. It was impossible to conceal the fact that the Irish bishops in 1799 had formally assented to such an arrangement, and it was supported by the English Catholics under the guidance of Mr. Butler; by the large majority of the Catholic aristocracy, gentry, and more important merchants in Ireland, as well as by all the leading English and Irish advocates of Catholic Emancipation in Parliament. Sheil, who after O'Connell was incomparably the most brilliant speaker in the Catholic Association, was on the same side.

The attitude of the Court of Rome was still more embarrassing. The Emancipation Bill of 1813, which Bishop Milner had denounced as schismatic and which gave the English Government the right of veto over the appointment of Catholic bishops, and proposed to appoint commissioners to examine and supervise all documents coming from Rome, received the full and formal approbation of Monsignor Quarantotti, who managed affairs at Rome during the captivity of Pope Pius VII. He was, as he wrote, 'placed, in the absence of the Supreme Pastor, over the concerns of the Sacred missions, and for that purpose invested with full pontifical powers,' and having brought the matter before a special congregation of the most learned prelates and divines in Rome, he wrote to an English bishop that the Catholics might 'with satisfaction and gratitude accept and embrace the Bill.' 'By the authority vested in us,' he added, 'we allow that those who are designed for a bishopric or deanery and are proposed by

the clergy, be admitted or rejected by the King according to the proposed Bill.' Nor did he object to the portion of the Bill relating to correspondence with Rome. 'Since communication with the head of the Church in spiritual and ecclesiastical concerns is not prohibited, but the inspection of the Committee regards only matters of civil policy, this likewise ought to be acquiesced in.'

The Irish bishops, largely under the influence of O'Connell, refused to recognise the authority of Quarantotti, or even the authority of the Pope himself in this matter. Deputation after deputation was sent to Rome. A priest named Hayes, who was deputed by the Irish Catholics, adopted such a tone that the Pope pronounced him to be 'intolerable,' banished him from the city, and took some credit to himself for not having shut him up in the Castle of St. Angelo. The Pope, however, consented to have the question examined afresh, and as a result of this examination, Cardinal Litta, the Prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, wrote a letter in April 1815, by the command of the Pope, defining the conditions which the Catholics might accept as the price of their emancipation. It in the first place laid down three different forms of oath which Catholics might take, and it then proceeded to the two burning questions involved in the Bill of 1813. Catholic bishops in Ireland were selected by the Holy See from names forwarded to it by the clergy of the diocese, and the Pope 'peremptorily orders' that no priests should be selected as candidates for the Episcopal office who did not in addition to other pastoral virtues 'possess in an eminent degree prudence, love of quiet, and loyalty.' But in addition to this guarantee, 'His Holiness will feel no hesitation in allowing those to whom it appertains to present to the King's

Ministers a list of candidates, in order that if any of them should be obnoxious or suspected, the Government may immediately point him out, so that he may be expunged, care, however, being taken to leave a sufficient number for his Holiness to choose from.' He at the same time promised as soon as emancipation was carried to issue a brief acknowledging the generosity of the British Government, and exhorting the Catholics to exert their utmost endeavours to prove themselves loyal subjects.

So far the decision is substantially the same as that of Monsignor Quarantotti, and it gave no satisfaction to the party of the bishops in Ireland. The examination of the rescripts from Rome, however, was pronounced by the Pope to affect the free exercise of the supremacy of the Church, and although he acknowledged that other Governments had assumed this power, it was 'an abuse which the Holy See, to prevent greater evils, is forced to bear, but cannot by any means approve.' The Cardinal adds that express instructions had been given to the bishops, prohibiting them from adverting in their reports to the Holy See to any political matters whatever. Under these circumstances the Pope hopes that the English Government will not insist upon this portion of their demand.[1]

The Irish bishops, however, were perfectly refractory on the subject of the veto, and they ultimately carried their point. They passed resolutions condemning all interference of the Crown of Great Britain in the appointment of Catholic bishops; they expressed their determination to resist such interference 'in every canonical and constitutional way;' they boldly declared that they did not conceive that 'their apprehensions

[1] See these two documents in the Appendix to Butler's *Memoirs of Catholics.*

for the safety of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland can or ought to be removed by any determination of his Holiness, adopted, or intended to be adopted, not only without our concurrence, but in direct opposition to our repeated resolutions,' and they sent a new deputation to Rome to inform the Pope of their 'respectful, firm, and decided' sentiments. O'Connell denounced the letter of Cardinal Litta as absolutely unacceptable, and inveighed in violent language against Bishop Milner, because he had written a confidential letter which O'Connell construed into a recommendation to accept the Papal decision in the terms of that letter. It appears, indeed, that Bishop Milner at Rome had opposed the veto so vehemently that he had been threatened with deposition from his episcopal office, but that he afterwards so far yielded as to describe the veto recommended in Cardinal Litta's letter as 'slight in itself and safe in its consequences.'[1] The Pope himself wrote a long letter to the Irish bishops, in which he described their apprehensions as 'destitute of all reason and of all foundation,' and argued with much force that the power of exclusion he had granted could not possibly be dangerous to the Church, and that it would be extremely impolitic 'to refuse this small interference in the election of bishops' to the British Government.[2]

The matter, however, was not pressed further. The bishops made no recantation, the project of a veto dropped silently out of politics, and when Catholic Emancipation was carried in 1829, Sir Robert Peel abandoned it as useless.

The division created in the Catholic body by this controversy was very serious, and it placed the more

[1] Amherst, *History of Catholic Emancipation*, ii. 180–187.
[2] Butler's *Memoirs of Catholics*, Appendix.

democratic section in strong opposition to the chief parliamentary advocates of the Catholic cause. Grattan himself on one occasion spoke of O'Connell in the bitterest terms. He said that when he paraded the grievances of Ireland, 'he omitted the greatest grievance—himself;' he accused him of 'setting afloat the bad passions of the people;' 'venting against Great Britain the most disgusting calumny;' and 'making politics a trade to serve his desperate and interested purposes;' and he added, with much truth, that 'it is the part of a bad man to make use of grievances as instruments of power and render them the means of discontent, without a single honest attempt at redress.'[1]

In the course of this controversy it was frequently urged that O'Connell's policy retarded emancipation. This objection he met with characteristic frankness. He avowed himself repeatedly to be an agitator with an 'ulterior object,' and declared that this object was the repeal of the Union. 'Desiring, as I do, the repeal of the Union,' he said in one of his speeches, in 1813, 'I rejoice to see how our enemies promote the great object. Yes, they promote its inevitable success by their very hostility to Ireland. They delay the liberties of the Catholics, but they compensate us most amply because they advance the restoration of Ireland. By leaving one cause of agitation, they have created, and they will embody and give shape and form to a public mind and a public spirit.' In 1811, at a political dinner, he spoke to the toast of Repeal, which had been given at his suggestion, and he repeatedly reverted to the subject. Nothing can be more untrue than to represent the repeal agitation as a mere afterthought designed to sustain his flagging popularity.

[1] Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, i. 524–526.

From first to last hatred of the Union was one of his strongest feelings. His first speech, as we have seen, was delivered against it. In his first speech on purely Catholic affairs, which was made in 1807, he again denounced it.

Nor can it be said that the project of repeal was first started by him. The indignation that the Union had produced in Ireland was fermenting among large classes. Lord Hardwicke, who was Viceroy almost immediately after the Union, clearly recognised the feeling and expressed grave apprehensions of its spreading. Many traces of it may be found in the pamphlets and correspondence of the first quarter of the century. In 1810 the grand jury of Dublin passed a resolution declaring that 'the Union had produced an accumulation of distress; and that, instead of cementing, they feared that if not repealed it might endanger the connection between the sister countries.' In the same year a great meeting, at which O'Connell spoke, was held in Dublin, and its resolutions in favor of repeal were communicated to Grattan, who was member for the city. Grattan replied that a demand for repeal could only be successful if supported and called for by the nation; that if that support were given, he would be ready to advocate it, and that he considered such a course perfectly consonant with devoted attachment to the connection.[1] Lord Cloncurry relates that he was a mem-

[1] Grattan's letter is so remarkable that I give it in full. It will be found in his Life by his son:

'Gentlemen, — I had the honour to receive an address, presented by your committee, and expressive of their wishes that I should present certain petitions and support the repeal of an Act entitled the "Act of Union," and your committee adds, that it speaks with the authority of my constituents, the freemen and freeholders of the City of Dublin. I beg to assure your committee, and through them my much beloved and much respected constituents, that I shall ac-

ber of a deputation which on another occasion waited on Grattan, and that Grattan said to them, 'Gentlemen, the best advice I can give my fellow citizens upon every occasion is to keep knocking at the Union.' [1]

O'Connell, however, though he never concealed his opinions on this question, had a strong sense of times and seasons, and in the earlier part of his career he made the emancipation of the Catholics the almost exclusive object of his policy. The machinery by which he worked consisted of associations binding together the great masses of the Catholic population and the not inconsiderable body of Protestants who supported their claims, and at the same time sustaining popular interest by a constant succession of aggregate meetings and fiery speeches. The nucleus of the agitation may be found in the Catholic Association, which was founded in 1806. Its great difficulty was the Convention Act of 1793, which prohibited any assembly in Ireland other than Parliament from assuming a representative character and authority, and consisting of delegates from other bodies, and made the election of such delegates unlawful. On the other hand, the right of petitioning was always recognised as a fundamental right; and by availing himself of this right O'Connell contrived with

cede to their proposition. I shall present their petitions and support the repeal of the Act of Union with a decided attachment to our connection with Great Britain, and to that harmony between the two countries, without which the connection cannot last. I do not impair either, as I apprehend, when I assure you that I shall support the repeal of the Act of Union. You will please to observe that a proposition of that sort in Parliament, to be either prudent or possible, must wait until it should be called for and backed by the nation. When proposed, I shall then, as at all other times I hope I shall, prove myself an Irishman, and that Irishman whose first and last passion was his native country.' — *Grattan's Life*, v. 419–420.

[1] Cloncurry's *Personal Recollections*, p. 172.

much dexterity to violate continually the spirit of the Convention Act, while keeping within the letter of the law. In 1807 every parish in Dublin sent delegates to the Catholic Association for the purpose of preparing petitions, and a certain number of gentlemen attended in their individual capacities, at the request of an aggregate meeting, to assist them.

In the following years the organisation was somewhat enlarged. All the members of the Catholic peerage, the survivors of the delegates who had been chosen for the Catholic Association of 1793, and the persons who had been chosen to prepare the Catholic petitions in 1805 and 1807, were to form part of the committee; but they disclaimed the character of representatives of the Catholic body, or of any portion thereof, and declared themselves to be only charged with the duty of preparing a petition to Parliament.[1] The establishment of local committees connected with the central body in Dublin was proposed, but rejected as too likely to infringe the law; but by distinct public meetings held in the different Catholic counties the connection was substantially maintained. The central body, however, gradually became bolder in its defiance of the Convention Act. It had at first confined itself to petitioning, but towards the end of 1810 it became a committee of grievances, and speeches were made at it and various Catholic grievances were agitated. A committee was then appointed—to be composed of the thirty-six members from Dublin and ten gentlemen from each county in Ireland—for the purpose of presenting an address to the King, a remonstrance to the British nation, and a petition to Parliament. It was to be called 'a general committee of the Catholics of Ireland,' and it was im-

[1] Wyse, *History of the Catholic Association*, i. 142–143; ii. Append. pp. xxvii–xxix.

agined that by thus specifying and limiting its objects the Catholic Committee would escape the interference of the Government; but in February 1811, Wellesley Pole, who was Chief Secretary for Ireland under the Richmond Administration, issued a circular letter declaring it, as now constituted, to be a violation of the Convention Act, and directing the magistrates to arrest all persons concerned in the election of delegates to it. Lord Fingall and several other members were arrested by virtue of a warrant from Chief Justice Downes, and admitted to bail. A trial followed, and two delegates accused of violating the law were acquitted by a Dublin jury on the ground that they had only been engaged in the lawful purpose of petitioning; but when the Committee attempted to establish their legality by the extraordinary measure of prosecuting Chief Justice Downes they were defeated. Delegation, even for the purpose of petitioning, was pronounced illegal, and the association was dissolved.

It was, however, at once replaced by 'The Catholic Board,' which, while absolutely disclaiming any representative character, was practically the same body consisting of a voluntary association of the former members. It never attained the activity or importance of its predecessor. The dissensions about the veto were now at their height. The great majority of the Catholic gentry were separated from the party of O'Connell and the priests, and the secession of the men of property and position soon weakened and discredited the Board. Local Catholic boards, however, for the purpose of keeping alive the question, were formed in many places. Aggregate meetings, in which O'Connell was the most conspicuous figure, were frequently held, and provincial subscriptions were started in 1813 for the purpose of supporting the central body.

In the House of Commons the Catholic question, under the guidance of Grattan and Plunket, seemed at this time very flourishing, and the letters of Peel and Saurin show the extreme despondency which had fallen upon the ultra-Protestant party.[1] In 1812 the House of Commons had pledged itself by 235 votes to 126 to take up the Catholic question in the following year, and in 1813 Grattan's Bill, with the added clause of Canning, giving the securities which I have already enumerated, seemed very likely to triumph. In three months no less than four divisions were carried in favour of the Catholics, and Grattan fully accepted the securities as reasonable and equitable. Wilberforce, who more than any other man in Parliament represented the religious Evangelical feeling of England, voted on this occasion with Grattan. Wellesley Pole, who had recently relinquished to Peel the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland, and who had hitherto been regarded as a strong opponent of the Catholic claims, now, to the great astonishment of his colleagues, made a speech urging the necessity of concession. The Government of Lord Liverpool was divided on the subject, but the progress of the Catholics under the guidance of Grattan was so manifest that Peel, who was still bitterly opposed to concession, acknowledged his despondency about ultimate success, while Saurin wrote that the Protestant cause seemed lost in the Commons, and that it was only on the question of securities that it was possible to make a rally.[2] But O'Connell and the bishops, to the great delight of Peel, threw over Grattan and repudiated the securities, and the cause of the Catholics speedily receded. The violent language used at the aggregate meetings disgusted some of their

[1] See Peel's *Correspondence*, vol. i. [2] *Ibid*, i. 80–82.

warmest friends. Even Bushe, who was now Solicitor-General, and who had been one of their oldest supporters, was now shaken. He said that the priests ought to be paid and that some other indulgences ought to be granted, but that their tone in Ireland was so violent that he was not ready to support immediate emancipation. An absurd proposal, made at one of the meetings, to ask Spain and Portugal to intercede in favour of Irish Catholics, was made much use of. I do not know that O'Connell had anything to say to it, but the Board was manifestly declining both in influence and character, and in 1813 Peel believed that it did not contain more than about twenty active members, and that its principal influence lay in a violent and seditious press.

At last, in June 1814, a proclamation was issued suppressing it as an illegal body, and it is remarkable that Grattan and nearly all the other Irish members of Parliament approved of the suppression.[1] O'Connell denounced it at an aggregate meeting as illegal and despotic, but he seems to have found no great support. He still maintained the organisation in an attenuated form by inviting its members in their individual capacity to meet him as guests in Capel Street. His agitation, however, appears at this time to have been almost dead. The aggregate meetings became fewer and fewer, and at last nearly ceased. In 1818, when the movement for parliamentary reform in England was beginning to rise, O'Connell occupied himself chiefly in arousing a corresponding spirit in Ireland, and he desired that Catholic petitions for emancipation should be for the present discontinued.

The nine years following the dissolution of the

[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, 138–141.

Catholic Committee in 1811 were the least brilliant and the least eventful in his career. His professional reputation, it is true, was steadily rising; he had become the undisputed leader and the chief inspirer of the clerical and democratic party who repudiated all concession of a power of veto or control over the Irish clergy to the English Government, and in 1815 the Catholics voted him a piece of plate of the value of 1,000 guineas as a testimonial for his services to the cause. But on the whole that cause had gone backward, and the fear that if the Catholics were emancipated their guidance would fall into bad hands had increased.

Two or three incidents relating to this period must be briefly told. In 1815 O'Connell fought his famous duel with D'Esterre, a member of the Dublin Corporation. It arose out of a speech in which O'Connell had denounced that body, which at this time was violently anti-Catholic, as 'a beggarly corporation.' The provocation, considering the usual tone of his oratory, was not very excessive, but D'Esterre deliberately took up the case, and on the refusal of O'Connell to recant forced on a duel. O'Connell, according to the received code, could hardly have avoided it. He was an excellent pistol shot, and there is no reason to doubt his assertion that he fired low with the express object of avoiding a mortal part, but his bullet entering the hip of D'Esterre, pierced the bladder, and two days after he died. His family and friends refused to prosecute, but the incident left a deep and lasting impression upon O'Connell. D'Esterre died in embarrassed circumstances, and O'Connell vainly tried to induce the widow to accept from him an annuity. He did prevail on her daughter to accept such an annuity, which was regularly paid till his death; and several

years after the duel, when Mrs. D'Esterre was involved in an important law-suit, O'Connell threw up some lucrative briefs in Dublin and posted down to Cork in order to plead her cause, which he did with perfect success. It was noticed by his friends that, long after the duel, whenever he passed the house in which D'Esterre had lived he lifted his hat and his lips were seen to move in prayer.

In the same year he was involved in another duel with a much more important person. Peel was at this time Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the deep and life-long antipathy between these two men had already begun. O'Connell early recognised in Peel the ablest and most dangerous opponent of the Catholic cause. With little or nothing of the pure fanaticism of Eldon or Duigenan or Saurin, it was his task during many years of his life to defend their policy on plausible grounds of expediency, and his influence contributed more than any other to counterbalance the Liberal instincts of Canning in the Liverpool Cabinet, and to throw back the question till the period had passed when it could be wisely and moderately carried. All the great services which Peel rendered in other fields can hardly counterbalance the evil which in this respect followed from his policy, and it was to that policy that he chiefly owed his seat at Oxford and much of the success of his early career. When he first came into collision with O'Connell it was still in its initial stage, and the temperaments of the two men were as different as their politics. The Irishman was utterly reckless in the language he used about his opponents, a man of violent impulses and swiftly changing moods. The Englishman was cautious, deliberate, conscientious, carefully weighing his words, yet concealing under a cold manner an extremely sensitive nature, keenly sen-

sible to any imputation upon his honour. O'Connell nicknamed Peel 'Orange Peel,' and he once said of him that 'his smile was like the silver plate on a coffin.' The provocation given in 1815 was at an aggregate meeting in Dublin, in which O'Connell accused Peel of having grossly traduced him in Parliament, where he could not be called to account for his words, and defied him 'in any place where he was liable to personal account to use a single expression derogatory to his integrity or honour.' After some angry correspondence Peel sent a challenge, which was accepted. It was agreed that the duel should take place in the county of Kildare, but O'Connell and his seconder, Mr. Lidwell, were at once arrested and bound over to keep the peace in the kingdom. The arrest of O'Connell was due to information given by his wife, who suspected the intentions of her husband, and the arrest of Lidwell is said to have been due to information given by his daughter. O'Connell offered to transfer the duel to the Continent. Ostend was selected as the place of meeting, and Peel at once left Ireland to go there. After some days' delay O'Connell followed, but his arrest in London terminated the affair.

Much angry recrimination followed. The friends of O'Connell accused the authorities of partisanship in having arrested him and not his opponent, while the manner in which the dispute at every stage was advertised in letters in the Irish newspapers, as well as the circumstances of the arrest, made many believe that O'Connell, at least, had no real desire to fight. An epigram attributed to Bushe was widely quoted:[1]

> Our patriots, adverse to slaughter,
> Improve on the Scripture command;

[1] There is a slightly different version of this epigram and of the circumstances that produced it in *Moore's Diary*, iv. 116.

They honour their *wife* and their *daughter*
That their days may be long in the land.

Grattan, who had always been very ready with his pistol, publicly spoke of O'Connell's courage 'as of a hesitating quality,' and shortly after the intended duel a characteristic scene is said to have taken place in the Irish Law Court. 'I think your lordship does not apprehend my meaning,' O'Connell is reported to have said, when arguing a law case before Lord Norbury. 'Oh, Mr. O'Connell,' interrupted the old Chief Justice, who had himself been an inveterate duellist, 'I know no one more easily apprehended than you are—when you wish it.'

O'Connell, however, from this time resolutely refused to be drawn into any duel. He publicly announced that he had registered before Heaven a vow on the subject. Few persons will now blame him for it. Quite apart from the religious motive which after the death of D'Esterre appears to have had a deep and genuine influence on his mind, it was in a high degree useful that a prominent public man should refuse to permit every ignorant firebrand to force him by insults into the field. But O'Connell ought at least to have registered another vow—himself to abstain from the language of scurrilous insult. This he never did, and there is scarcely a public man from whom he differed who was not the object of his outrageous abuse. It had become an inveterate habit of his mind. In his most private correspondence miscreant, ruffian, vagabond and such like terms are always recurring, and in his speeches, and even in his deliberate writings, similar language was constantly employed. Stanley was 'Scorpion Stanley,' Lord Alvanley was 'a bloated buffoon,' the Duke of Wellington was a 'stunted corporal,' Lord Brougham was 'an indescribable wretch.'

Others were described as 'a mighty big liar,' 'a lineal descendant of the impenitent thief,' 'a contumelious cur,' 'a sow,' 'a fellow whose visage would frighten a horse from its oats.' The ceaseless torrent of abuse which at every period of his life, and in every sphere in which he moved, he poured upon all opponents; the rapidity with which he passed, on very small provocation, from a tone of the most hyperbolical praise to the language of Billingsgate; and the virulence with which he attacked some of the most illustrious characters in the country, prejudiced all moderate men against him. It was said that his mind consisted of two compartments—the one inhabited by the purest angels, and the other by the vilest demons—and that the occupation of his life was to transfer his friends from the one to the other. Such language could hardly fail to lower the character of the movement, and it especially weakened his position when he became a member of Parliament. That tone of gentlemanly moderation, that well-bred, pungent raillery which is so characteristic of the English Parliament, and of successful English ministers, has often proved a more efficient weapon of debate than the most splendid eloquence or the most trenchant wit. It draws a magic circle round the speaker, which only similar weapons can penetrate, and it seldom fails to secure the attention and the respect of the public.

Some palliation, or at least some explanation, of the language of O'Connell may, no doubt, be found in the violence with which he was assailed in the English press, as well as by a considerable section of his own countrymen. The 'Times,' especially under the editorship of Colonel Sterling, was throughout his life his bitterest enemy, and the language it employed was sometimes far in excess of anything that could now be found in respectable journalism. O'Connell nick-

named this paper 'the Lady of the Strand,' and compared it to a misplaced milestone which could never by any possibility tell the truth. There is one curious letter extant in which O'Connell expressed a wish that his son should avoid personalities in his speeches, adding that this was the more necessary, as it was a 'hereditary defect.' But in truth he never seems to have placed any real restraint upon his tongue. He almost boasted of his license, saying that 'when a man happened to be a scoundrel he had a pretty good tongue for describing him,' and he again and again said that violence was the best means of gaining a point in politics. 'People used to say to me,' he once said, '"O'Connell, you will never get anything as long as you are so violent."' What did I do? I became more violent and I succeeded.'[1] He contrasted the indifference shown to petitions from English Catholics who were the most loyal and respectful of men with the concessions obtained through the angry pressure of the Catholics in Ireland; when remonstrated with about the violence of his attacks he contented himself with answering that no one was more ready to recant if he had misstated any fact, and he sometimes expressed what appears to have been a perfectly sincere surprise that men whom he had at one time loaded with abuse were afterwards unwilling to co-operate cordially with him. He, indeed, rarely showed sustained rancour, and a great part of his career was spent in conciliating opponents and trying to smooth down animosities. He was fond of quoting the French proverb, 'You will catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a hogshead of vinegar.'

On the whole, however, he did both himself and his

[1] O'Neill Daunt's *Personal Recollections*, i. 285.

cause a lasting injury by the habitual extravagance of his language. He won by his splendid gifts the admiration of multitudes who were far from sharing his views, and the passionate devotion of millions of his countrymen, but neither the admiration nor the love was largely mixed with respect.

Besides the duel and proposed duel I have related, perhaps the most striking incident of this period of O'Connell's life was the reception of George IV. in Ireland. During the period that immediately preceded and that which immediately followed the Union the conscientious objection of George III. had formed the most insuperable obstacle to the attainment of Catholic emancipation. The deep respect which his high personal character and long reign naturally inspired, and perhaps still more the unhappy fact that one of his attacks of insanity had been associated with the agitation of the Catholic question, gave the opposition of the King an overwhelming weight; but the Catholics naturally looked forward to a new reign to relieve them of that obstacle. The Prince of Wales had been a close associate of Fox and his party, and at the time when the question was first raised in the Imperial Parliament he had given the Whigs the most distinct and authentic pledge of his desire to see the Catholics relieved from their disabilities, and of his intention to exert himself for their relief as soon as he should have it in his power to do so constitutionally. The explicit statements of Ponsonby and of Earl Grey in 1812 leave no doubt on the subject.[1] In that year the insanity of George III. was recognised as complete and incurable, and the establishment of a permanent regency in the hands of his son removed what Pitt had regarded as

[1] See Taylor's *Life of Peel*, i. 52–53.

the one real obstacle to the Catholic concession. No one can wonder at the resentment and disappointment of the Catholics when they found that the Regent now ranged himself against their claims, and that the sovereign power of the realm was once more exerted to prevent their emancipation. It is now known that the dissolution of the Catholic Board in 1812 was largely due to instructions written by the Prince Regent to the Duke of Richmond, who was then Viceroy;[1] and the attitude of the special friends of the Prince in Parliament left no doubt about his disposition. The change, rightly or wrongly, was generally attributed to the influence of a mistress, and the exasperated Catholics in Ireland, while renewing their petition for relief, drew upon their famous 'Witchery Resolutions' in terms of the bitterest sarcasm. 'From authentic documents before us,' they said, 'we learn with deep disappointment and anguish how cruelly the promised boon of Catholic freedom has been interrupted by the fatal witchery of an unworthy secret influence, hostile to our fairest hopes, spurning alike the sanction of public and private virtue.' O'Connell supported these resolutions in a speech which the Prince is said never to have forgotten or forgiven.

He, however, in every period of his career professed a deep attachment to the connection of Ireland and England through the medium of the Crown; and George IV. when he came to Ireland in 1821, immediately after his coronation, was received with a wild enthusiasm which seemed to justify the somewhat strange saying of Swift, that 'loyalty is the foible of the Irish.' O'Connell bore a leading part in it; he on this occasion did his best to allay differences and promote a tem-

[1] Fitzpatrick, *ii* 421.

porary reconciliation of the Orangemen and the Catholics, and he was a prominent figure in the reception of the monarch. He presented the King with a laurel crown when he left Ireland, and pledged himself to subscribe twenty guineas a year to a palace which it was proposed to erect for him in Ireland. The extreme sycophancy of the language, which became usual, disgusted many of his friends. Moore wrote in his 'Diary' of the 'worse than Eastern prostration of his countrymen,' and declared that they had been so long slaves that 'they knew no medium between brawling rebellion and foot-licking idolatry.' Cobbett and Brougham commented bitterly on the conduct and language of O'Connell; and Byron, who took great interest in the Catholic cause, which he had defended in the House of Lords, has immortalized his indignation in the 'Irish Avatar.' It must be remembered that the visit occurred just after the shameful trial of the Queen, and that the news of her unhappy death arrived when George IV. was in Dublin.

O'Connell afterwards indignantly repudiated some untrue or exaggerated reports of his proceedings on this occasion,[1] and in this, as on most other occasions, if his conduct was largely due to genuine impulse, a deliberate policy mingled with it. He hoped to find in the visit of the King an occasion of drawing Protestants and Catholics together and effecting a reconciliation which he ardently desired, and he hoped also, by an ostentatious demonstration of Catholic loyalty, to influence favourably the mind of the sovereign. There were some signs that the feelings of the King to the Catholics had changed. He assured the people, with emphasis, that he came to Ireland as the father of all his

[1] Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, i. 270–274.

people. The Catholic bishops were received in their ecclesiastical costumes and with their golden crosses and chains, and Lord Fingall, the head of the Catholic laity, was presented by the King with the Order of St. Patrick. Lord Sidmouth, by the King's orders, wrote a letter to the Lord Lieutenant declaring that 'the testimonies of dutiful and affectionate attachment which his Majesty received from all classes and descriptions of his Irish subjects had made the deepest impression on his mind,' and expressing his ardent wish that 'not only the spirit of loyal union which now so generally exists should remain unabated and unimpaired, but that every cause of irritation would be avoided and discountenanced.' All this raised hopes which were soon proved to be deceptive. Before Catholic Emancipation was carried O'Connell wrote to Lord Cloncurry: 'The great enemy of the people of Ireland is his Most Sacred Majesty.'[1]

It was not until 1821 that the Catholic cause revived with any real chance of success. O'Connell himself seemed to have almost cast it aside, maintaining that it would never be carried in the form which he desired in an unreformed Parliament, and that all the efforts of the Irish should be directed toward radical parliamentary reform. He was accustomed at this time to issue annual letters to the people of Ireland, and in that which was published on the first day of 1821 he put forward this view in the strongest terms, defending it largely on the ground of the resignation of Canning, which had weakened the Catholic cause in the Cabinet. This letter was answered with much severity and point, though in rather tawdry eloquence, by Sheil, who entirely denied that O'Connell at this

[1] Sept. 4, 1828. Fitzpatrick, i. 164.

time spoke the voice of the great body of Catholics. In defiance of O'Connell's wishes the Catholic cause in Parliament was now in the strong hands of Plunket, who was known to share the views of Grattan about the veto. Sheil notices that at a very numerous meeting of Catholics which had recently been held, a resolution, proposed by O'Connell, expressive of the unwillingness of the Roman Catholics to accede to any ecclesiastical arrangement, was only carried by a majority of six, and that several of the parishes of Dublin confided their petitions unreservedly to Plunket without placing any control on his discretion.[1]

The Relief Bill of 1821 was conceived on the broadest lines, throwing open to the Catholics not only seats in Parliament, but also all offices under the Crown except the Chancellorship and the Lord Lieutenancy, but it was accompanied by a Bill giving the Crown a veto on the appointment of Catholic bishops, and exacting an oath from every priest that he should take no part in the election of any dignitary of the Church except such as he should conscientiously believe to be of unimpeachable loyalty and peaceable conduct, and have no correspondence with Rome 'on any matter or thing which may interfere with or affect the civil duty or allegiance which is due to his Majesty.'

These Bills were at first separate, but were afterwards consolidated, and they were carried successfully through by small majorities in the House of Commons.

The second reading was carried by a majority of eleven; a proposal to exclude Catholics from Parliament was thrown out by a majority of twelve. When it was first introduced the measure received the approbation of Bishop Doyle, the ablest of the Catholic prel-

[1] McCullagh's *Memoirs of Sheil*, i. 145.

ates in Ireland,[1] and the petition of the English Catholics in its favour was signed by seven out of the eight Apostolic Vicars. Bishop Milner, however, who had done so much to defeat Grattan's Bill in 1813, was still inexorable, and actually signed a petition against the Bill, and a party in Ireland, supported by several bishops, and actively stimulated by O'Connell, took the same line. The Bishop and the priests of Limerick were conspicuous for their violence, and O'Connell, in a speech in that town, absurdly and wickedly described Plunket's Bill as 'more penal and persecuting than any or all the statutes passed in the darkest and most bigoted period of Queen Anne and of the first two Georges.'[2] A proposal of Peel to exclude Catholics from the Privy Council and the judicial Bench was defeated by a majority of 43. The third reading was carried by a majority of 19.

'I wish with all my heart,' O'Connell wrote in a private letter, 'that the present rascally Catholic Bill was thrown out.'[3] His wish was gratified by the House of Lords, where the Bill was lost on its second reading by a majority of 39. It was on this occasion that the Duke of York made his first declaration of inexorable hostility to Catholic Emancipation. This declaration contributed largely to wreck the Bill, but perhaps hardly more so than the attitude of O'Connell and his followers.

Yet O'Connell with all his violence was seldom quite averse to compromise, and it appeared for a time that the advent of Lord Wellesley as Viceroy in this year was about to produce some alteration in his policy. Lord Wellesley was the first Irishman who for many

[1] Fitzpatrick's *Life of Doyle*, i.147–148.

[2] See Plunket's *Life*, ii. 70–78. *Annual Register*, 1821.

[3] Fitzpatrick, i. 71.

years had been appointed to that post. He had been an open advocate of the Catholic claims, and although he took an early opportunity of stating that 'he came to administer and not to change the law,' and although his Chief Secretary, Goulburn, was opposed to Catholic Emancipation, his advent seemed to mark a considerable step of progress. O'Connell attended his first levee and was received with marked favour; but the most important consequence of the new Administration was the removal of Saurin from the great post of Attorney-General which he had held for nearly fifteen years and the substitution of Plunket, who, though greatly disliked by O'Connell, was at least the leading Irish advocate of the Catholics. Bushe nearly at the same time was made Chief Justice. O'Connell at once entered into a negotiation with the Government relating to the terms on which the Catholics would accept a settlement of the question, and these terms involved in a modified and restricted form the veto which he had so long opposed. He proposed to give the British Government the power of objecting to any persons elected to the episcopacy on the score of disloyalty, but the inquiry into the facts was to be delegated exclusively to two Catholic bishops, and their sentence was to be decisive. He also proposed that the clergy should be obliged to submit to the Government any correspondence with Rome on political subjects, though on these alone. The concessions would have been of little or no value, and much to the satisfaction of O'Connell himself they were rejected by the Government.[1]

The country was at this time in a state of great disturbance. The high prices of agricultural produce that had existed during the war had come to an end,

[1] Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, i. 279–280.

and attempts to keep them up artificially by protective corn laws had proved wholly useless. There was, it is true, during some years a violent fluctuation of prices, and in numerous cases the old engagements and covenants based on war prices still continued in force. But in 1821 and 1822 the fall was sudden and decisive, and a partial failure of the potato crop was at once followed by famine and by the pestilence that follows in its trail. The evil was not confined to Ireland. In every portion of the British Isles the years after the conclusion of the great French war had been years of acute distress among the agricultural and landed classes and of much disorder and discontent. But in Ireland the evil was far more desperate than in England or Scotland. Population had of late years multiplied with an appalling rapidity and out of all proportion to the resources of the country, and a minute subdivision of the soil had accompanied it. The whole economical fabric had come to depend on the continuance of high prices and high rents, and no people in Europe were less fitted than the Irish to adapt themselves to changed circumstances or were placed under circumstances more unfavourable. There was an absentee aristocracy. There was a poor and extravagant gentry. There was a pauper, improvident, utterly ignorant peasantry depending for their whole subsistence on the cultivation of the soil. A hierarchy of idle middlemen stood between them and the real owner. This system existed over nearly the whole of Ireland, and in some parts there were as many as six or seven middlemen between the proprietor of the fee and the actual occupier. All these had to derive their profit from the soil, and the extreme competition for land in a rapidly growing population had forced up its rent far beyond its intrinsic value.

These excessive rents were not in general either ex-

acted or received by the true landlord. Under the system of long leases which generally prevailed the rental received by the owners of the soil was usually moderate, but the actual cultivator was ground down by the upper tenants and lived in the most abject poverty. Except on the sea coast, where fish could be obtained, his ordinary diet was potatoes and water with a little salt, and there was a time between the going out of the old and the coming in of the new potatoes when even this could not be easily obtained, and when vast multitudes lived only by migratory begging. Their homes were mud hovels, almost without furniture, where whole families lay huddled together, without bedsteads, in the straw. There was no poor law. In three provinces there was hardly anything corresponding to the English middle class; hardly any of that manufacturing industry which in a prosperous country absorbs a surplus agricultural population and relieves the pressure on the soil. Agricultural wages had sunk almost to starvation limits and settled employment could be rarely obtained, for the absenteeism of the rich and the subdivision of land into farms so minute that they could be easily cultivated by the farmer and his family left very little space for independent agricultural labour. In the evidence he gave before the Select Committee in 1825, O'Connell mentioned that in his own county of Kerry the usual wages of an agricultural labourer were 6*d.* a day without a meal and 4*d.* with it; that constant employment was almost unknown, and that wages in a large proportion of cases were not paid in money but in food. In the famine year of 1822, he said, many labourers cheerfully worked in Kerry for 2*d.* a day without victuals, being paid in money.[1]

[1] First Report from Select Committee on the State of Ireland. (February 25, 1825.)

Few things are so terrible as a dense, ignorant, and rapidly increasing population, with no adequate demand for their labour, with no savings or prospect of saving, with no legal provision for the destitute and the unemployed. This was the situation in Ireland, and it was greatly aggravated by the fact that the Church, which was not the Church of the poor, was supported by tithes levied with extreme inequality and injustice on the very poorest, who had in addition to support their own clergy. There are few methods of levying money which have been in general more unpopular than tithes, this impost being, as Paley observed, 'not only a tax on industry, but the industry that feeds mankind,' and of course the natural objections to it were immeasurably intensified when it was levied from a half-starving peasantry, who derived no religious benefit from the ministrations of those they were compelled to pay. A second rent, raised from the most impoverished classes of the community in favour of men who contributed nothing to production, and who were opposed to the religious convictions of those who paid them, was a grievance that could not fail, when the Catholics acquired some measure of self-confidence, to produce a general conflagration. In the eighteenth century opposition to tithes had been one of the chief objects of the Whiteboys, and the landlords were said sometimes to have instigated them. The capital injustice of the old Irish Parliament in exempting pasture from tithes had constituted a shameful privilege in favour of the richest and largest farmers; while even the other tithes were levied unequally in the different provinces. It was stated before the Select Committee to which I have referred that an occupying tenant in Munster, having half an acre of potatoes—which was the amount deemed necessary for the sup-

port of a peasant family—sometimes paid six, eight, ten, or even twelve shillings for the tithe of that half-acre, while his immediate neighbours, who had large farms in pasturage, paid nothing. In the great pasture counties, indeed, the tithe proctor usually found little tillage, except the potato plots of the very poor, and was therefore obliged to exact with a greater minuteness his legal dues.[1]

The difficulty of collecting tithes, owing to the hostility of the people, and still more to the extreme multiplication of small dues,[2] made it absolutely necessary for the clergyman to farm out the collection to a tithe proctor, who usually paid him a fixed sum, making his profits out of the peasantry. The tithe proctors corresponded closely with the middlemen. They were very often themselves Catholics, and they formed one of the most unhealthy, oppressive, and disturbing elements in Irish life. Add to all this the habits of chronic lawlessness and conspiracy which had come down from a distant past, and which, though certainly not without explanation or palliation, fatally obstructed Irish improvement. Optimist statesmen pointed to the increase of exports and imports since the Union. They urged that Belfast and the linen trade had greatly advanced; that some attempts had been made, with temporary success, to introduce the manufacture of the coarser linens into the southern and western parts of Ireland; that the cattle trade with England was large and flourishing. But all the detailed inquiries that were made

[1] See the very remarkable evidence of J. L. Foster.

[2] Shortly before the tithes in Ireland were commuted it was stated officially that in a single parish in Carlow the sum owed by 222 defaulters was one farthing each, and that a large proportion of the defaulters throughout the country were for sums not exceeding ninepence. See the Speech of Littleton on February 20, 1834. Hansard, xxi. 577.

into the state of the Irish poor between 1815 and the great famine concur in representing it as a condition of wretchedness hardly paralleled in Europe. The population almost doubled between the Union and the great famine without any corresponding and proportionate increase in their means of subsistence. Few persons, I think, can compare the state of Ireland as it appears in the pages of Arthur Young with the parliamentary inquiries of 1824 and 1825, or with the evidence collected twenty years later by the Devon Commission, without arriving at the conclusion that the condition of the great masses of the population had rather retrograded than advanced.

Great changes also in the tenure of land had taken place. From the time of Arthur Young it had been the settled conviction of the more intelligent Irish landlords that the abolition of the middleman was the first condition of improvement, and during the last years of the eighteenth century much had been accomplished in this direction. The fall of prices that followed the peace vastly accelerated the movement, but it was also unfortunately accompanied by a great transformation of leasehold farms into tenancies at will. The middleman had been a long leaseholder, but his sub-tenants were usually tenants at will, and when the former disappeared the tenure of the latter was not changed. It was noticed that at this time an unusually large proportion of the more substantial farmers who were Protestants emigrated,[1] and that Catholics who had more recently lived in great poverty and who were less enterprising took their places. Landlords had come to recognise the evils that had grown up under the old system of long leases, and especially the im-

[1] This is mentioned by O'Connell in his evidence in 1825.

possibility of enforcing clauses against sub-letting and subdivision, while the leaseholders who had entered into their contracts at the time of war prices were unable to fulfil their contracts. Many became bankrupt and either threw up their farms or consented to hold them at a reduced rent as tenants at will. There was much uncertainty about the future of agriculture and about the normal range of prices; contracts of all kinds in agriculture became more difficult, and both landlords and tenants were less disposed to bind themselves for the future. A stamp duty payable by the tenants also contributed to discourage leases, and under all these influences they greatly diminished. At the same time the evil of sub-letting was more strongly felt, and especially the evil of a pauper cottier tenantry breaking up the land into minute fractions, exhausting and ruining it by bad cultivation, and with no capital to restore it.

As the pressure of agricultural distress increased landlords discouraged such tenancies, and it in consequence became more difficult to obtain a plot of land. Evictions terribly multiplied either from the non-payment of rent, or from the bankruptcy of a middleman, which often entailed the ruin of a crowd of sub-tenants, or from a simple desire of landlords to improve their estates by a consolidation of farms. The law expressly encouraged such a policy. There was a scandalous provision that every superior tenant had the right of distress over the immediate occupier, so that it was possible for the occupier to have paid his rent to the middleman who was his immediate landlord and yet to be made liable for default of a tenant of a higher grade. An Act of 1817 for the first time enabled the landlord in Ireland to distrain growing crops. The power had long existed in England, but in Ireland it was pecu-

liarly oppressive owing to the custom of sub-letting land several deep, as each tenant in the grade of middleman had the power of distraint. More than one Act had been passed since the peace for the purpose of cheapening and facilitating the process of eviction or distress. They were intended to assist the landlord in enforcing his rights in the face of agrarian conspiracy, but they also much stimulated disturbances in the south.

O'Connell described this system in detail in his evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1825, and he noticed the extreme harshness of the lower orders in Ireland in their business relations with one another. 'I have known,' he said, 'persons who would be ready to die for one another in personal quarrels as harsh about one shilling or sixpence as if they had never known one another.' Whenever any of the middleman-tenants differ about their accounts, the man who claims more than the other has paid or is willing to pay settles the dispute by distraining the actual occupier. Many too of the real landlords were to blame. 'They were much involved in debt and could not get their living, and used their peasants as harshly as the peasants did one another.' In general, however, as another observer noticed, 'rents were higher, were sooner called for, and more rigidly exacted in proportion as the middleman descended in the scale of society and approximated to the degree of the peasant.' 'Where the tenant held directly under the head landlord his comforts were much more regarded, and in general the rent was less exorbitant and the right of exaction less oppressive.[1]

[1] Ferguson and Vance, *Tenure and Improvement of Land in Ireland*, p. 184. Foster's evidence before the Select Committee (1825). See, too, a Speech of the Earl of Darnley on the State of Ireland (April 18, 1824).

In 1826 a very important measure, known as the Sub-letting Act,[1] was carried. It was imitated from a Scotch Act, and intended to put down as far as possible the system of middlemen and sub-letting. It forbade all sub-letting of land under future leases of less than ninety-nine years, or lives or years renewable for ever, without the express written consent of the landlord. It deprived the middleman who sub-let in defiance of the law of all power of recovering his rent, making the transaction wholly null and void, and it extended the same provision to the sub-letting, which in innumerable cases had taken place in land held under old leases that contained clauses against it. All transactions made in violation of these clauses were made null and void unless they were authorised in writing by the landlord. If a tenant who sub-let by assent failed to pay his rent, the landlord might give notice to the sub-tenants to pay their rents to himself. This Act was a serious blow to the ruinous system of breaking up land into minute tenancies, held by a pauper tenantry, but it produced many evictions; it greatly added to the difficulty of obtaining land at a time when population was vastly increasing; it was vehemently attacked, and it was remodelled and in part repealed in 1832.

The chronic lawlessness is sufficiently shown by the constant and drastic laws that were put in force to repress it. Tithes, high rents, evictions, the consolidation of farms, the transformation of arable land into pasture; and sometimes the excessive dues that were exacted by priests, were the chief causes, but every local quarrel speedily assumed the form of organised outrage, and the combination of extreme idleness and utter destitution, produced by the smallness of the

[1] 7 Geo. IV. c. 29.

farms and by the absence of steady agricultural labour, had greatly strengthened the disposition to lawless enterprise. Its outbreaks were not always due to distress or confined to the poorest districts. Lord Whitworth had noticed their great prevalence in 1811, 1812, and 1813 when the high war prices had given much prosperity to farming and produced a real improvement in labourers' wages,[1] and there is a remarkable letter of Peel in which he described Tipperary as 'by far the most troublesome county in Ireland,' and attributes its turbulence 'to sheer wickedness, encouraged by the apathy of one set of magistrates and the half connivance of another.' 'For the last thirty years,' he adds, 'and probably for the last three hundred, this same county of Tipperary has been conspicuous even in the Irish annals of violence and barbarity, having less excuse in the distress and suffering of its inhabitants than most other parts of Ireland. But there is more than one district in the south of Ireland in which plenty and prosperity incite to crime rather than repress it.'[2]

Peel was a harsh judge of Irish life, which he cordially detested, but O'Connell himself clearly recognised the fact that the organisers of crime were not usually the very poorest. Torrens mentions that he once said to him that poverty was at the root of the agrarian evils. O'Connell replied with a melancholy smile, 'There is no danger in poverty; it is the smug, saucy and venturous youth of the farmer class that plot and perpetrate all the predial mischief.'[3] At the same

[1] *Speech of Sir H. Parnell on Disturbances in Ireland* (June 24, 1823), p. 25.

[2] Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 125.

[3] Torrens's *Twenty Years of Parliamentary Life*, p. 299; so, too, in one of his Speeches in 1825, he said: 'Whiteboy acts are for the most part per-

time it is undoubtedly true that great outbursts of agrarian crime have usually followed some great increase of suffering, and this was certainly the case in 1822 and 1823. Famine and pestilence stalked through the land, and there was scarcely a county that was not convulsed by outrage. Lord Wellesley stated in the beginning of 1822 that disturbances had occurred in no less than sixteen counties of Leinster and Munster; that in the province of Connaught the great body of the people had been sworn; and that even in Ulster 'strong indications have been generally manifested of resistance to the process of the law.' During the preceding thirty-one years it was stated that no less than twenty-six had been years of actual insurrection or disturbance.[1]

Coercion Acts in abundance had been enacted. An Arms Act, allowing domiciliary visits and prohibiting the use of arms, was now part of the standing law of the country, and there was a Peace Preservation Act enacted in 1814, strengthening the police establishments of Ireland; but the Insurrection Act, prohibiting persons in proclaimed districts from leaving their houses at night, had been suffered to lapse in 1818. It was revived in 1822, and the Habeas Corpus Act was again suspended. All the horrible forms of agrarian crime habitual in Ireland—murder, incendiary fires, 'carding' or torturing obnoxious persons, systematic persecution of all who infringed the popular agrarian code—were going on, and the prospect of the future

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petrated by sturdy, lazy fellows who are unwilling to work.' Cusack, i. 456. See also on this subject, Lewis, *Irish Disturbances*, pp. 89–92.

[1] See the great Speech of Sir Henry Parnell *on Disturbances in Ireland*, (June 24, 1823). This speech is an admirable summary of the whole subjects it treats, pp. 7–16.

was very dark. There seemed no check on the multiplication of a people whose priests always preached early marriages, and who were absolutely destitute of those industrial habits that chiefly tend to retard marriages, while the most powerful influences stimulated the subdivision of farms. Every parent, when his child came of age, demanded it, and the whole popular sentiment was in its favour. The law which gave votes to the 40*s.* freeholders gave the landlords the strongest inducement to take the course which on other grounds was most popular, for by multiplying dependent voters, who as yet were absolutely subservient to their will, they greatly increased their consequence and power. Far-seeing politicians looked almost with despair on the prospect. 'If six million discontented Irish are to become twelve millions without any change being effected in their temper and habits, while they are every day learning how to evade the violences of coercive laws and to make the system of secret association more general and more manageable, a power will grow up on the side of England of such magnitude as may be able to cope with her power and involve her in all the calamities belonging to a new effort to conquer Ireland.' [1]

Nature in her own good time, and by her own ghastly surgery, at length corrected the evil, and the great famine and the gigantic and long-continued emigration that followed at last turned the more fertile parts of Ireland into a thinly populated pasture country, in which a small farming population lived in comfort, and in which agricultural labour, which was once so terribly redundant, had become extremely scarce. The problem, however, for a long time seemed almost

[1] Sir H. Parnell, p. 18.

hopeless, and certainly the introduction of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament, however just and necessary, was neither the only nor the most important remedy that was needed.

During the existence of the Irish Parliament the essential evils of the Irish land system appear to have been little realised. The Parliament was a parliament of landlords. The population was comparatively small, and the war prices and the great prosperity of the corn trade with England during the last years of the century made men insensible to the dangers of excessive subdivision of the soil. This Parliament did much by the system of bounties to support different forms of non-agricultural industry, but it fully accepted the doctrine which then prevailed in England, and indeed in most countries, that the education of the poor was a matter for churches and individuals and societies, but not a great national duty. Nothing is more remarkable in the speeches of Grattan than the almost entire absence of those agrarian questions which have in modern days become so prominent. The one great agrarian grievance which he recognised was the grievance of tithes, and, as we have seen, he made several earnest though unsuccessful efforts to remedy it.

The early speeches of O'Connell were, in this respect, not very different from those of Grattan. The tithe system was the one agrarian grievance which he keenly felt. No one, I think, can blame him for his hostility to it. Bishop Doyle, who was a man of higher character, had expressed his hope that in Ireland 'the hatred of tithes would be as lasting as the love of justice.' Whenever agrarian distress became acute the war against tithes broke out afresh, and it was followed by gross and constant outrage, by frequent and sometimes bloody collisions between the people and the

police. O'Connell did undoubtedly advocate and encourage 'passive resistance' to the payment of tithes, and this in a population like that of Ireland inevitably led to crime.

One measure of considerable value, dealing with this question, was carried by the administration of Lord Wellesley. It was the Tithe Composition Act of 1823 [1] which substituted for the existing tithe system a fixed annual sum regulated by the average price of wheat or oats, and binding on both parties for twenty-one years. It provided that where the composition was made, owners of land should let their land tithe free, or the occupier paying the composition might deduct it from his rent. It equalised the burden by making it a tax according to the acreable value of a farm, and abolished the exemption of pasture land which was the greatest grievance of the system. Unfortunately this Act was not compulsory, and though it was adopted on a large number of estates, the greater part of Ireland remained outside its scope. The grazing farmers not unnaturally disliked it, and it only touched the fringe of the question.

Something also was done to strengthen and improve the police force, and there was a much needed revision of the magistracy. There was a widespread distrust of the magistracy and a very general belief that large numbers of them were amenable to bribes, and it was remarked that one of the effects of the Union had been that, owing to the increased absenteeism of the Protestant gentry, the difficulty of finding proper persons to fulfil the office of magistrate had greatly augmented.[2]

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[1] Geo. IV. c. 99.

[2] See the *Civil Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington (Ireland)* p. 85.

The establishment in 1823 of Petty Sessions in which the magistrates sat together in open court instead of giving isolated and individual decisions was a real and important reform. It produced probably a substantial improvement in the magistracy, and it certainly immensely increased the confidence of the people.

The Catholic question, however, now dominated over all others in Ireland, and O'Connell had entered upon the brilliant period of his life. The long series of disappointed hopes and abortive efforts had kindled among the Irish Catholics a not unnatural exasperation, and O'Connell gave the keynote to a new movement by a speech in which he declared that there was a great unused power which must be called into action if the Catholic cause was to succeed—the priesthood of Ireland. Up to this time their appearances in politics had been very rare, and probably on the whole on the side of the Government. The ministers had more than once entered into negotiations with Catholic bishops. In the rebellion of 1798 it is true that a few priests had been active leaders of the rebels, but the United Ireland movement in its conception was rather Presbyterian and freethinking than Catholic, and there is reason to believe that the priesthood were on the whole a restraining influence, and that they often gave useful secret information to the Government. The Union was the first struggle since the Revolution in which they played a considerable part, and it was all exerted in support of that measure. Their interference at elections in the years that followed appears to have been very unusual, and the Catholic 40*s*. freeholders might almost always be counted upon as completely as the Protestant tenants to act in obedience to the direction of their landlords.

In the 'Wellington Correspondence,' however, there is one remarkable letter describing an election in Tip-

perary during the general election of 1807, which seems to foreshadow later events. 'There never was anything,' writes Arthur Wellesley, 'equal to the violence of the priests, and of the whole Roman Catholic body in the county of Tipperary. They have fomented serious riots to frighten Bagwell's freeholders, and prevent them from going to the poll. The priests have inveighed against him from the altars, and have successfully endeavoured to prevail upon the Catholic tenantry to oppose the wishes of their landlords.'[1] But cases of this kind appear to have been rare, and, although ecclesiastical influence was largely employed by O'Connell in creating and consolidating the opposition to the veto, this opposition was directed to a purely ecclesiastical question, and was for the most part confined to the higher clergy. Meetings, however, in favour of Catholic Emancipation were sometimes held in the chapels, and there were some few priests in different parts of Ireland who already took an active part in politics.[2]

It was the great work of the new Catholic Association which was founded in 1823 to bring the priesthood as a body into Irish politics, and it soon became one of the most powerful political bodies known in history. O'Connell and Sheil were now cordially united, and their extraordinary eloquence soon electrified the country; but it was especially to the untiring energy of O'Connell, to his infinite skill in seizing opportunities and managing men, to the complete self-devotion with which he threw himself into the cause, and to the indomitable courage with which he encountered difficulty and disappointment, that it chiefly owed its success. The original members of the new Association, who

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[1] *Wellington Correspondence* (*Ireland*), p. 72.
[2] See Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, i. 283–284.

were only forty-seven, undertook to provide an annual subscription of one guinea. In order to evade the Convention Act it was not representative, but open to all subscribers; it was not exclusively Catholic, and all its meetings were open to reporters. It at first seemed to excite little interest, and at one of its earliest weekly meetings there was not even the requisite quorum of ten members, but O'Connell went out into the street and absolutely forced some Maynooth students, whom he found standing before a neighbouring bookshop, to attend.

In 1824 he devised the expedient of a Catholic rent to be collected in every parish, and this at once gave a new character and impulse to the Association. The sum to be levied was only 1*d.* a month or a shilling a year. It was to be collected in every parish and through the instrumentality of the priest, and thus priest and people were drawn into the movement. Before the close of 1824 the rent reached from 600*l.* to 900*l.* a week, providing ample funds for the support of the movement and giving it a representative character of the most formidable description. Before another year had passed the Association had 10,000*l.* invested in the funds, and was in the receipt of an income of 1,000*l.*, and sometimes even 1,200*l.*, a week. What was still more important, it formed a kind of Parliament which took cognisance of all political and social grievances, and to which Catholics from all parts of the country looked for protection in the law courts. It was a great democratic organisation, but it included Lords Clanricarde, Fitzwilliam, Fingall, Cloncurry, Gormanstown, and several other peers and large landowners of both religions.

The speeches of O'Connell and Sheil at constant meetings kept up the excitement, and that strange,

unrivalled magnetic power which O'Connell exercised over the great masses of his countrymen was soon at its height. Sheil at this time co-operated cordially with him, and though he never attained anything approaching O'Connell's ascendency over the people, he was only second to him in the power of impassioned oratory. He was one of the many examples of splendid oratorical powers clogged by insuperable natural defects. His person was diminutive and wholly devoid of dignity; his voice shrill, harsh, and often rising into a positive shriek; his action violent, theatrical, and ungraceful. He was a poet and a brilliant and successful dramatist, and it was, perhaps, in consequence of the habits he acquired in those fields that his speeches, though often extremely beautiful as compositions, were always a little overcharged with ornament and a little too carefully elaborated. In their highly ornate character they bear some resemblance to the speeches of Canning, and the best of them will hardly, I think, suffer by the comparison. They seem exactly to fulfil Burke's description of perfect oratory—'half poetry, half prose;' yet we feel that their ornaments, however beautiful in themselves, offend by their profusion. Two very high excellences he possessed to a pre-eminent degree—the power of combining extreme preparation with the greatest passion and of blending argument with declamation. There are few speakers from whom it would be possible to cite so many passages with all the sustained rhythm and flow of declamation, yet consisting wholly of condensed arguments. He was a great master of irony, and, unlike O'Connell, could adapt it either to a vulgar or to a refined audience. He had but little readiness, and almost always prepared the language as well as the substance of his speeches; but he seems to have carefully followed the example of

Cicero in studying the case of his opponents as fully as his own, and was thus enabled to anticipate with great accuracy the course of the debate. He nearly always dazzled and pleased even when he failed to move the passions or convince the reason.

In almost every respect O'Connell differed from him. Had he been a man of second-rate talent, he would have imitated some of the great orators who adorned the Irish Parliament: he would have studied epigram like Grattan, or irony like Plunket, or polished declamation like Curran. He seems, however, to have early felt that neither the character of his mind nor the career he had chosen were propitious for these forms of eloquence, while he was eminently fitted to excel in other ways. He possessed a voice of almost unexampled perfection. Rising with an easy and melodious swell, it filled the largest building and triumphed over the wildest tumult, while at the same time it conveyed every inflection of feeling with the most delicate flexibility. His action was so easy, natural, and suited to his subject, that it almost escaped the notice of the observer. His language was clear, nervous, and fluent, but often incorrect, and scarcely ever polished. As Sheil complained, 'he often threw out a brood of sturdy young ideas upon the world without a rag to cover them.' What especially struck the critics of his oratory was its spontaneity, its unfailing lucidity, and its versatility. His speeches before a law court, before Parliament, and before a popular audience were wholly different, and each kind was admirably adapted for its end. He neither aimed at nor cared for the graces of oratory and he could sometimes descend very low, but no man of his generation could reason more powerfully, or state a case more clearly, or sway the passions of a great multitude with such consummate skill. He used

to say that his most carefully prepared speeches were always the least successful. He seldom aimed at ornament, and when he did it was apt to be tawdry and meretricious; but when he relied exclusively on the feelings of the moment, he often rose to a strain of masculine eloquence that was all the more forcible from its being evidently unprepared. 'I know of no living orator,' said an acute French critic,[1] 'who communicates so thoroughly to his audience the idea of the most profound and absolute conviction.' The listener followed clearly the transparent workings of his mind—could perceive him hewing his thoughts into rhetoric with a negligent but colossal grandeur, with the chisel not of Canova, but of a Michael Angelo.

The power of the society he had created and the alarm it in some quarters excited appear abundantly in the correspondence of the time. The Duke of Wellington wrote to Peel that if the Catholic Association was not got rid of Ireland was sure sooner or later to have a civil war, and that the organisation of the disaffected was far more powerful than in 1798. Peel, who was then Home Secretary, and Goulburn, who was Irish Secretary, both acknowledged that there were no signs that O'Connell was meditating rebellion or that any preparations for it were being made, but the state of the country seemed to them scarcely less alarming. In the words of Peel, 'a power co-ordinate with the Government was rising at its side and daily counteracting its views,' and Goulburn declared that 'an indiscreet or wicked priest (and there are many of both classes) might to-morrow send forth his congregation to destroy the lives and property of their Protestant neighbours.' The language of O'Connell was often extremely inflam-

[1] Duvergier.

matory, and seemed to go far beyond any simple demand for reform. Peel quotes one characteristic sentence: 'The English arrived in Ireland one fine morning about six hundred years since, and have done nothing but disturb and devastate it.' In all parts of the country fears of immediate massacres and insurrection were expressed to the Government, and it was stated that an approaching war formed a general topic of conversation among the lower orders.

In the north the Orangemen were rapidly multiplying and acquiring a fanaticism which was largely stimulated by the increasing boldness and power of the Catholic movement. In the beginning of the administration of Lord Wellesley fierce riots broke out in Dublin on account of the refusal of the Lord Mayor to permit the decoration of the statue of William III., and when Lord Wellesley, who had approved of that refusal, attended the theatre a storm of disapprobation broke out and a bottle was thrown by some unknown person at the Viceregal box. It was a scandalous outrage, but the Government made a great mistake in treating it as a deliberate attempt at assassination, and in instituting a prosecution on a capital charge against the rioters. This charge, it is true, was speedily withdrawn, and to the great indignation of Plunket the grand jury threw out the bill against most of the rioters.

Plunket was equally unfortunate and equally injudicious in a prosecution he instituted against O'Connell in the beginning of 1825. Great enthusiasm had been aroused in many quarters by the career of Bolivar, who was then leading the rising against the Spanish power in South America. O'Connell seems to have shared the feeling, and with his full approbation one of his sons went to America to serve under the insurgent flag. In a speech in Ireland, when dilating on the dangers

of resisting the Catholic claim, O'Connell is stated to have said, 'Oppression drives the wise man mad. It has not yet had that effect on the Irish people; it has never driven them to the extremity of desperate resistance, and Heaven forbid it should; but if such an event came to pass, may another Bolivar and the example of Greece animate their efforts,' or, according to another version, 'may another Bolivar arise to vindicate their rights.'[1] Goulburn and Plunket selected this passage for prosecution as being an incentive to armed rebellion. According to the best reports, O'Connell's language had been far too carefully guarded and too hypothetical to be a proper subject of prosecution, and it was somewhat unfortunate for the prosecutors that before the case could come to trial the policy of Canning had triumphed, and the independence of the Spanish colonies for which Bolivar contended had been recognised by the English Government. The evidence about the exact words used by O'Connell was not satisfactory, and the Protestant grand jury of Dublin threw out the bill.

The question of Catholic Emancipation was now entering into a very acute stage. George IV. wrote to Peel declaring that he shared in full measure the hostility to Catholic Emancipation 'of his revered and excellent father,' and never could or would deviate from those sentiments; and in another letter he declared that he was so inexorably opposed to the very moderate measure of granting letters of precedence to a Roman Catholic barrister that in case the Cabinet recommended it to him he would positively refuse his consent.[2] Even the anti-Catholic portion of the Cabinet

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 63–64. Peel's *Correspondence*, i. 354.
[2] Peel's *Correspondence*, i. 349, 359.

was alarmed at these declarations and kept them carefully from the public. On the other hand, the Cabinet was convinced that the Catholic Association must be put down, and not less convinced that it could only be done by special legislation. A Bill was accordingly drawn up for this purpose, and it included a clause directed against the processions of the Orange Society. On the great question, however, of the admission of the Catholics into Parliament, there was a considerable modification of opinion in the Cabinet, largely due to the changed aspects of affairs in Ireland. Peel and Eldon remained steady in their opposition, and Lord Liverpool, contrary to a prevailing rumour, was still unshaken; but the dominant feeling was now in favour of concession, accompanied by the two securities of the payment of the priests and the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders. The Catholic Relief Bill of this year was put in the hands of Sir Francis Burdett, and being supported by Canning and Plunket, though opposed by Peel, it passed its second reading in the Commons by a majority of 27, and its third reading by a majority of 21. The Bill raising the electoral franchise in Ireland was read a second time by a majority of 38, and a resolution in favour of endowing the Catholic priesthood by a majority of 43. O'Connell believed that the triumph of his cause was almost achieved and would not be delayed beyond 1825. It was noticed that at this time the great preponderance of the English Press was in favour of the Catholics,[1] and, in spite of the violence of the Orange party in the north, they were supported by the most important of the Protestant gentry of Ireland. Accompanied by Sheil and by some other prominent Catholics, O'Con-

[1] Fagan, i. 335.

nell went in the February of 1825 to London on a deputation from the Catholic Association in order to protest against its suppression. A short sketch written by Sheil, and O'Connell's own letters written to his wife, give a graphic account of this expedition.

The better side of O'Connell's nature never appears more clearly than in his charming, but most unstudied, letters to his wife and children. No one who reads them can fail to recognise in them a deeply affectionate nature, eagerly craving for sympathy, disclosing to those he loved with an almost childlike simplicity all his moods and impulses of joy and sorrow, of triumph and disappointment. It is very noticeable how clearly his strong religious feeling is revealed in these letters, which were certainly not intended to see the light. Not many busy lawyers or politicians can have been so anxious to observe, and to oblige his fellow-travellers to observe, strictly the Lenten fast, even when they arrived hungry at a wayside inn after a long day's journey, or so determined not to travel on Sunday until they had attended early mass. One of the most interesting episodes of the journey was a visit to Bishop Milner—then a very old and feeble man, but a man whom they regarded with the deepest reverence. Although the deputation failed to attain its object of preventing the suppression of the Catholic Association, it was far from useless. It brought O'Connell into close and friendly connection with the leaders of the English Whigs. He spoke with great power at a meeting held in London in favour of concessions to the Catholics. He attended several sittings of the House of Commons, with which he was by no means impressed, and he gave much valuable evidence on the state of Ireland before a Select Committee which was held in this year.

This Committee collected the best material we pos-

sess for a full knowledge of the general state of Ireland in 1825, and no part of it is more valuable than the evidence of O'Connell. It is marked by great knowledge, by great acuteness, and also by great moderation, and seems to have left a very favourable impression upon those who heard it. At this period of his career O'Connell showed an eminently conciliatory spirit and a genuine anxiety that Catholic Emancipation should be carried in a spirit which would not irritate or inflame Protestant opinion in Ireland. A few years before he had written to Lord Cloncurry: 'To my judgment, no emancipation can be of any avail but such as shall be satisfactory to all parties. It should not participate in any, even in the slightest, degree of a victory by the Catholics over the Protestants. On the contrary, it should come as a kind concession from the Protestants, and be received in the spirit of affectionate gratitude by the Catholics. It should, in short, be precisely similar to the relief granted in 1778, to that conceded in 1782, to that bestowed in 1792, and finally to that of 1793.'[1] In his evidence before the Parliamentary Inquiry he used very similar language. 'I would beg leave to say it would be better to leave things as they are than to have an Emancipation Bill that was not in a proper spirit both for the Catholics and Protestants, for it would be giving us additional power and leaving still a stimulant to those animosities that divide the country, and I think the thing should remain as it is, unless it be done heartily and cordially.' 'There never,' he said, 'was a period when it would be so easy to subdue the hostile feelings between Catholics and Protestants or to create a better one than just now. . . . We have brought the people to a great connection now

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. p. 69. This letter was written in 1820.

with the gentry. We have combined the clergy with the gentry and the people. . . . There is universal tranquillity at this moment, and acting thus together and the disposition of the clergy of every class and the gentry being most sincerely to consolidate the interests of the people with that of the Government, I am convinced that at this moment it can be done with more effect and general satisfaction than at any time that has come within my knowledge up to this. At any former period there would have been something of triumph and, perhaps, of insolent victory on our parts. I do not think there would be the least at present.

On the subject of the proposed securities he showed himself very willing to meet the wishes of the Government. Of the payment of the priests he fully approved. It must not, he said, precede emancipation, for otherwise it would appear as if the priests were trafficking for their own advantage. It must not consist of any transfer of tithes, the impost the Irish people most bitterly abhorred. Nor must it be accompanied by any provision giving the Government a power of interfering with the appointment of priests or with any purely ecclesiastical concerns, though at the same time if at any future time any real and substantial evil was found to result from the present ecclesiastical situation, he said that he was quite sure that after emancipation the Government would find great facilities both at Rome and in Ireland for making satisfactory arrangements. But subject to these conditions he fully approved of a State endowment for the priesthood. 'I am sure,' he said, 'that if an equalisation of civil rights took place they would accept of it, and that the Catholic gentry would concur with them in a desire that they should, the object being to connect the Catholic clergy and laity of Ireland with the Government itself, to embody

them, as it were, as a portion of the State, and to give the Government what we would desire—a reasonable and fair influence over the Catholic clergy, so that there should not be even an idea of any danger of their being taken away to favour a foreign enemy or to favour domestic insurrection.' 'I am thoroughly convinced that the object of the Catholic clergy and laity of Ireland is sincerely and honestly to concur with the Government in every measure that shall increase the strength of the Government in Ireland, so as to consolidate Ireland with England completely in every beneficial respect.'

On this subject O'Connell did not speak the opinions of the bulk of the Catholic clergy or of the Catholic democracy which supported them. He soon convinced himself that popular feeling was not behind him, and he ultimately avowed himself a true, though reluctant, convert to the voluntary principle. But long after Catholic Emancipation was carried his correspondence shows that he retained his belief that a measure at least giving glebes to the Catholic priesthood would be of great benefit to Ireland. A long succession of the best judges of Irish affairs have concurred in his opinion.

On the question of the disfranchisement of the 40*s*. freeholders he was more hesitating, but the inconsistency of his attitude in 1825 with his attitude in 1829 has been exaggerated. In 1825 he was trying to carry Catholic Emancipation by an amicable bargain with the Government, and at that time the 40*s*. freeholders, except in the towns, had shown themselves almost absolutely destitute of political independence. They almost invariably voted as their landlords told them, and a vast amount of corruption was connected with their creation. O'Connell frankly avowed that he did not like their disfranchisement. He said that his own

opinions were in favour of the widest possible extension of the suffrage. He believed that the Protestant 40*s.* freeholders would be bitterly discontented if their disfranchisement were made a condition of Catholic Emancipation, and he urged that without emancipation such a measure would have the worst possible effect upon the Catholics. But if Catholic Emancipation were carried he thought the Catholics should acquiesce in the disfranchisement if the Government desired it, and he was of opinion that a qualification of 5*l.* or 10*l.* would bring with it a greater amount of independence among the electors. He did not, he said, acquiesce in the abolition of all 40*s.* freeholders. Those in the towns were often an independent and intelligent class; but those who held minute farms at a rack-rent, or who were tenants in common, were absolutely dependent and abjectly wretched, and if landlords turned their lands into 10*l.* freeholds it would be a real benefit.[1]

His hopes of a speedy triumph of the Catholic cause were soon dashed to the ground, and under circumstances well calculated to exasperate Irish opinion to the utmost. The Catholic Bill, having passed the Commons, came before the Lords, and it there found an opponent of the most formidable kind. I have already mentioned that in 1821 the Duke of York, who was heir-presumptive to the throne, had declared in that House his unqualified opposition to Plunket's Bill for emancipating the Catholics, and had stated that this opposition arose from principles 'which he had embraced ever since he had been able to judge for himself, and which he hoped he should cherish to the last day of his life.' In 1825 he made a still more violent, and indeed indecent, speech, which at once placed him at

[1] Fagan, i. 381, 399.

the head of the most fanatical section of the opponents of emancipation. Standing up in his place to present a petition against the Catholic Bill, he argued in the most unqualified terms against any further concessions to the Catholics. He said that he felt the subject more forcibly when he remembered that to the agitation of the Catholic question must be ascribed the illness which clouded the last days of his illustrious and beloved father, and he concluded by declaring that the principles of his father were those which he had imbibed from his earliest youth, that he would adhere to them and maintain them and act upon them to the latest moment of his existence, whatever might be his situation in life—so help him God.[1]

Few speeches have had such a deep and lasting effect. The House of Lords, largely under its influence, threw out the Bill by a majority of 48. The exultation of the extreme anti-Catholic party in finding the heir to the throne their avowed leader was unbounded. His speech was printed in letters of gold and placarded on the walls of London. His portrait hung in the houses of the most vehement Protestants, and his health became a standing toast, coupled with that of the glorious, pious and immortal memory. 'Never,' wrote Lord Eldon, 'was anything like the sensation the Duke of York's speech has made;' 'it has had such an operation upon all ranks of men, that it will create insuperable difficulties to passing the intended measure another year.' 'It has placed him on a pinnacle of popularity.'

It is impossible to look back on all this without feeling the utter madness of the course which was being pursued. Sooner or later Catholic Emancipation must

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[1] Walpole, *History of England*, ii. 202, 256. Twiss's *Life of Eldon*, ii. 542–547.

have come, but what kind of element was it likely to bring into the Constitution? The loyalty of the Catholics was already a very dubious and hesitating sentiment, but there was still time to conciliate their priesthood. The bishops were fully open to negotiation, and O'Connell at least did his best to maintain an attachment to the connection and the throne. The farewell address of the Catholic Association when it was suppressed in 1825 urged upon their co-religionists the duty of 'attachment to the British Constitution and unqualified loyalty to the King.' But how could it be expected that this loyalty would last? George III. by his individual action had prevented the triumph of the Liberal policy of Pitt by which alone the Union could have been made a success, and by his inflexible will had thrown back the Catholic question for many years. George IV., in spite of the clear pledges which he had given to the Catholics, had adopted the same policy with equal vehemence and almost equal effect, though certainly not with equal moral authority. And now the heir to the throne had come forward to avow his determination of continuing the tradition and making himself the leader of the most extreme party opposed to the emancipation of his Irish Catholic subjects. We may lament, but we can hardly wonder, that when the Duke of York was stricken down with a mortal illness in the succeeding year, the event was received in Ireland with some measure of indecent exultation.

The Duke of Wellington wished to dissolve Parliament during the excitement produced by the Duke of York's speech, but his counsel was not followed. In 1826, however, the dissolution took place, and it turned largely in England on the No-Popery cry; and this cry had a great influence over the elections. In Ireland O'Connell now threw aside the scabbard, and flung him-

self with tremendous power into the fray. The suppression of the Catholic Association, on which the Government relied, proved absolutely inefficacious. The country was thoroughly organised, and O'Connell knew that he had the people behind him. With the dexterity of a skilful lawyer, he soon reconstructed the Association under another name and in a form which was fully adequate to his requirements.

The old Catholic Association had sat for several months at a time, ostensibly for the purpose of petitioning, and had assumed much of the character of a Parliament discussing Catholic grievances. Goulburn's Act, suppressing it, limited meetings for the purposes of petitioning to fourteen days; and by suppressing the Association made illegal the rent which was paid to it. O'Connell at once set up a new association, which was ostensibly for purposes of education and charity, 'and for all purposes not prohibited by law,' and which therefore had a right to receive contributions, and, as a matter of fact, it received the old rent. Some paid their rent 'for the relief of the 40*s.* freeholders;' O'Connell 'for all purposes allowable by law.' Catholic Emancipation was outside the avowed objects of the new body, but every week a separate meeting was called which professed to be distinct from it, and was called 'a fourteen days' meeting, held pursuant of Act of Parliament.' The members of the Association attended these fourteen days' meetings, and the requisitions summoning them were signed at meetings of the Association. The organisation for collecting rent, supported in almost every parish by the local priest, assumed gigantic proportions, and 'Church wardens,' as they were termed, were appointed in every parish for the purpose of collecting it. At the same time vast aggregate meetings were held all over Ireland, and the elo-

quence of O'Connell and Sheil, and of numerous minor delegates of the Association, lashed the people into a frenzy of excitement.

The great feature of the election of 1826 was the revolt of the Catholic 40*s.* freeholders against their landlords. Hitherto in Ireland, and also, it must be said, in Great Britain, it was received as an almost unquestioned axiom of agricultural ethics that the tenant must follow in all political matters the lead of his landlord. Ideas have on such subjects so profoundly changed that it is difficult for us to realise how completely this notion had been accepted by all classes. There were cases in which such a condition was inserted in leases. More commonly no such measure was deemed necessary, for no resistance was even contemplated. All favours granted by a landlord to his tenant, all remissions or delays of rent, were understood to be conditional on this relation, and in the popular conception the duty of a tenant to vote with his landlord was like that of the Scotch clansman to follow his chief in battle. Even in counties convulsed by Whiteboy disturbances this notion was unbroken, nor, indeed, does it appear to have placed any real strain on the conscience of the tenants. There were certain subjects in which the Catholic cottiers were keenly interested. The agrarian question involved in the Whiteboy movement, the attacks upon tithes, the war against evictions, and the regulation of priests' dues were genuinely popular questions, and there ran through the Irish nature a deep vein of fanaticism which might, as in 1641 and 1798, become very formidable; but questions of the suffrage, of religious disqualifications, of the balance or disposition of political power, of the scope and nature of the Constitution, were almost wholly outside the ideas of the Catholic peasant. Up to the period of

O'Connell the struggle for Catholic Emancipation had been essentially a middle-class movement. A prosperous and intelligent Catholic commercial class had arisen in the great towns, and they found their leaders in the Catholic aristocracy and landed gentry, and were closely allied with Protestant Liberals of the school of Grattan. It was the great work of O'Connell to have changed the conditions by bringing the priesthood actively into the fray, and by their instrumentality awakening the great masses of the Catholic peasantry from their political sleep. The prediction of Parsons that the Irish Parliament, in bestowing the franchise on the vast mass of the Catholic peasantry, were taking a measure which, though it might have no very visible effect in the immediate future, would ultimately lead to a total revolution of power, and probably of property, was now coming true. Two great electoral contests were selected as the battlefield. In Waterford the Beresford influence had long been supreme, while in Louth, Leslie Foster, one of the most intimate friends of Peel, was the candidate; and these two seats the Catholic Association now resolved to attack.

The attempt was strongly resented. Landlord influence in the shape of threats and also in the shape of evictions was freely resorted to, while a fierce Orange fanaticism in the north was aroused to the utmost by the appearance of the priesthood on the arena. But a passionate enthusiasm was now kindled among the Catholics which overbore every obstacle. The letters of Leslie Foster, of Goulburn the Chief Secretary, and of Peel, who now presided over the Home Office, give a vivid and authentic picture of the intensity of the struggle. In the words of Sheil, it was a choice between the distress warrant and the cross. In the chapels the priests were now preaching that the eternal

salvation of the voter was at stake; that every tenant who lost his farm on account of his vote had earned the crown of martyrdom, while hell was the inevitable doom of all who at this great crisis proved false to their Church.

Nor was it merely spiritual threats that were employed. Many Protestants, Leslie Foster declares, were forced to vote against him by threats of assassination or of having their homes burnt. Fierce mobs waylaid and beat voters who were hostile to O'Connell, and the form of intimidation so well known in our day under the name of boycotting was in full force. 'In several towns,' wrote Goulburn, 'no Roman Catholic will now deal with a Protestant shopkeeper in consequence of the priests' interdiction.' 'It is impossible to detail in a letter the various modes in which the Roman Catholic priesthood now interfere in every transaction of every description, how they rule the mob, the gentry and the magistracy; how they impede the administration of justice.' 'They exercise on all matters a dominion perfectly uncontrolled and uncontrollable. In many parts of the country their sermons are purely political, and the altars in several chapels are the rostra from which they declaim on the subject of Roman Catholic grievances, exhort to the collection of rent or denounce their Protestant neighbours in a mode perfectly intelligible and effective, but not within the grasp of the law.' 'O'Connell is complete master of the Roman Catholic clergy; the clergy are complete masters of the people, and upon him and them it depends whether the country shall or shall not be quiet during the winter.' There were 20,000 soldiers at this time stationed in Ireland, but Goulburn begged the Government not to forget that a great proportion of these were Catholics, and that whatever disturbance

takes place in Ireland would at once assume a religious character.

The predictions of the best judges were full of gloom. The Duke of Wellington wrote that war or peace in Ireland depended upon a few leaders of the Catholic Association, 'possibly upon O'Connell alone by the medium of the priests.' Peel saw a darker cloud than ever impending over Ireland in the dissolution of 'one of the remaining bonds of society, the friendly connection between landlord and tenant,' and he believed that in no previous period did party animosity, and especially the animosity of creeds, run higher than at present. Leslie Foster, who was in the centre of the storm, predicted that if Catholic Emancipation were now carried, the priests would dominate over every Catholic constituency; that at least sixty Catholic members would be returned, and those of the most violent type, and that O'Connell might sit for any southern county he chose. 'Their presence in the House of Commons would be the least part of the mischief. A *bellum servile* would ensue all over Ireland.' 'The landlords,' he wrote, 'are exasperated to the utmost, the priests swaggering in their triumph, the tenantry sullen and insolent. Men who, a month ago, were all civility and submission now hardly suppress their curses when a gentleman passes by; the text of every village orator is: "Boys, you have put down three Lords—stick to your priests and you will carry all before you." . . . The landlords will no doubt be driven to refuse freehold leases to Roman Catholics, and to encourage by all artificial means a Protestant population. But this is a distant prospect, and in the meantime the power of these priests is become so tremendous and their fury in the exercise of it so great, that I begin to fear a crisis of some kind or other is not far distant.'

The result was a substantial, though not a complete, triumph of O'Connell. Great numbers of the Catholic 40*s*. freeholders compromised the question by giving one of their two votes to the candidate of the landlord and the other to the candidate of the priest. In very many cases they threw their whole influence into the scale of O'Connell. In several counties the force of the new movement was felt, and in Waterford, where the Beresfords had hitherto been supreme, Lord George Beresford found himself so completely deserted by his people that he did not go to the poll. In the county of Louth Leslie Foster retained his seat, but Dawson, the candidate of O'Connell, headed the poll by a large majority. The gentry of the county had been almost unanimous in favour of Foster and in opposition to Dawson.

This general election in Ireland virtually decided the fate of the Catholic question. It showed that a new power had arisen which was likely in all future struggles to be irresistible. Goulburn acutely observed that, although the priesthood had originally been called into action by the Catholic Association, their power was entirely independent of it, that they now felt their strength and were determined to exert it, and that their discipline in action, their unity of aim, and their immense power over their people had made them by far the strongest power in Ireland. O'Connell, he said, is their complete master, and 'upon him and them it depends whether the country shall or shall not be quiet during the winter.'[1]

O'Connell, however, though determined to use to the utmost the great organisation he had created, had no desire either to lead a rebellion or to stimulate any

[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, i. 409–430.

form of crime. It is characteristic of him that in this very year he wrote to Plunket warning him that he had received information that the Ribbon Men were secretly arming over a great part of Ireland, that the organisations were taking a new and more military form, that rumours were spreading of Orangemen arming against the Catholics and that the Catholics were arming with a view to self-defence. Rumours of this kind had been prominent among the influences that impelled the Catholics in the rebellion of 1798, and O'Connell viewed them with genuine alarm. He implored Plunket not to neglect them, and suggested that an increase of the number of the King's troops in Ireland was very desirable. He also boasted, and there appears to have been good ground for his boast, that the fierce fever of political agitation which he had created had not only not increased agrarian crime, but had actually been accompanied by its diminution. As the Government themselves clearly saw, it was both his interest and his desire, while keeping the country in a state of agitation, at the same time to prevent any outburst of riot that could become the pretext of military intervention, and so far he had perfectly succeeded in his attempt.

The year 1827 witnessed several events which materially modified the political prospect. It opened with the death of the Duke of York, and in February Lord Liverpool was stricken down with palsy, and the Government was thus deprived of its head. The system of Cabinets divided on the Catholic question now became untenable, and the accession of Canning to the chief place in the Government was immediately followed by the resignation of Peel, Eldon, and Wellington, the three strongest opponents of the Catholic claims, as well as of some less important peers. The Duke of Wellington, not content with relinquishing his seat in

the Cabinet, even threw up the post of Commander-in-Chief, which he had only just accepted on the death of the Duke of York. Peel, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, placed his resignation solely on the ground of the Catholic question. The accession to the first place of an advocate of concession must, he said, necessarily assist it; and, as he wrote to his brother in April, 1827, 'to the carrying of that question, to the preparation for its being carried, I never can be a party.' He dwelt upon the fact that during the eleven years with which he had been connected with the Government of Lord Liverpool he had either as Chief Secretary for Ireland or as Home minister been in immediate contact with Irish affairs, and specially responsible for their administration; that during the whole of that period he had taken an active and prominent part in opposition to the Catholic claims; that he had of late been the only minister of the Crown in the House of Commons who was opposed to them.[1] The ministry of Canning, deprived of this support and relying largely on the precarious assistance of the Whigs, must necessarily have been a weak one, and any hopes the Catholics might have entertained from his accession to power were soon dashed to the ground. Four months after he had accepted the office of Prime Minister Canning was in his grave, and Wellington, with Peel as his chief supporter, was the head of the Government.

O'Connell was alternately discouraged and exasperated by the course of events. He urged that a petition for the repeal of the Union should be drawn up, and he expressed his strong hope that it would find some Protestant support. 'The assistance of Protestants,' he wrote about this time, 'generates so much good feel-

[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, i. 426, 485, 486.

ing and such a national communion of sentiment that I deem it more valuable than emancipation itself.' A strenuous Orangeman, writing to the Government, acknowledged that, unless the Government took an unhesitatingly Protestant line, the majority of the Irish Protestants were in favour of compromise with the Catholic party.[1] The House of Commons was very evenly divided. In 1825 the Catholic question was carried in it by a majority of 21. In 1827 it was defeated there by a majority of 4. In 1828 it was again carried by a majority of 6. Peel noticed that among the Irish members 61 were in favour of Catholic Emancipation and only 32 against. Of the 64 Irish county members, 61 voted, and of these 45 were in favour of the Catholics and only 16 against them.[2] The preponderance of the English press and a large proportion of the more important counties and of the larger English towns were in favour of the policy of Canning.

In 1828 the Whigs, for the first time after many years, won a great triumph in the abolition of the Sacramental test which was intended to exclude Dissenters from offices under the Crown. The motion was introduced by Lord J. Russell and carried by a majority of 44, in spite of the opposition of the newly appointed Government. When the question was raised, O'Connell at once organised a great Catholic petition in favour of it. The step was both magnanimous and politic, for the Dissenters were perhaps more generally hostile than the Anglicans to the Catholic cause. It was part of the policy which O'Connell was always most reluctant to abandon, of uniting the great body of the Irish Protestants with the Catholics both on the ques-

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[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, i. 426. Fitzpatrick's *Correspondence of O'Connell*, i. 139, 165.

[2] Peel's *Memoirs*, i. 289.

tion of emancipation and on the question of repeal. It was a policy which even led him to make ardent overtures to the Orangemen, and on one occasion at a public banquet to drink the health of the glorious, pious, and immortal memory.

It would, however, be unjust to attribute his conduct merely to such motives. However inconsistent he might be on other questions, he was uniformly in favour of religious liberty and tolerance in all its forms. He was never one of those who claimed it for themselves and sought to deny it to other creeds or in other lands. We shall hereafter see more of the nature of his religious policy, which forms a very important element in his career.

He at the same time identified himself with an extreme form of Radical democracy: universal suffrage, vote by ballot, the transformation of the House of Lords, annual, or at least biennial, Parliaments.

Meanwhile the great Catholic organisation was steadily pushed on, and the passions of the people kept at the highest temperature.

On the accession of the Wellington Ministry to power, the Catholic Association passed a resolution to the effect that they would oppose with their whole energy any Irish member who consented to accept office under it. When the Test and Corporation Acts were repealed, Lord John Russell advised the withdrawal of this resolution, and O'Connell, who, at that time, usually acted as moderator, was inclined to comply. Fortunately, however, his opinion was overruled. An opportunity for carrying the resolution into effect soon occurred. Fitzgerald, the member for Clare, accepted the office of President of the Board of Trade, and was consequently obliged to go to his constituents for re-election. An attempt was made to induce a Major

Macnamara to oppose him, but it failed at the last moment, and then O'Connell adopted the bold resolution of standing himself. The excitement at this announcement rose at once to fever height. It extended over every part of Ireland, and penetrated every class of society. The whole mass of the Roman Catholics prepared to support him, and the vast system of organisation which he had framed acted effectually in every direction. He went down to the field of battle, accompanied by Sheil, by the well-known controversialist Father Maguire, and by Steele and O'Gorman Mahon, two very ardent but eccentric repealers, who proposed and seconded him. Steele began operations by offering to fight a duel with any landlord who was aggrieved at the interference with his tenants while O'Connell, Sheil, and Father Maguire flew over the country, haranguing the people. The priests at the same time addressed their parishioners with impassioned zeal from almost every altar; they called on them, as they valued their immortal souls, as they would avoid the doom of the apostate and the renegade, to stand firm to the banner of their faith. Robed in the sacred vestments, and bearing aloft the image of Christ, they passed from rank to rank, stimulating the apathetic, encouraging the faint-hearted, and imprecating curses on the recreant. They breathed the martyr spirit into their people, and persuaded them that their cause was as sacred as that of the early Christians. They opposed the spell of religion to the spell of feudalism—the traditions of the chapel to the traditions of the hall.

The landlords, on the other hand, were equally resolute. They were indignant at a body of men who had no connection with the county presuming to dictate to their tenants. They protested vehemently against the introduction of spiritual influence into a political election,

and against the ingratitude manifested towards a tried and upright member. Fitzgerald had always been a supporter of the Catholic cause. He was an accomplished speaker, a man of unquestioned integrity, and of fascinating and polished manners. His father—who was at this time lying on his death-bed—had been one of those members of the Irish Parliament who had resisted all the offers and all the persuasions of the ministry, and had recorded their votes against the Union. The landlords were to a man in his favour. Sir Edward O'Brien, the father of Smith O'Brien, and the leading landlord, proposed him, and almost all the men of weight and reputation in the county surrounded him on the hustings. Nor did he prove unworthy of the contest. His speech was a model of good taste, of popular reasoning, and of touching appeal. He recounted his services, and the services of his father; and, as he touched with delicate pathos on this latter subject, his voice faltered and his countenance betrayed so genuine an emotion that a kindred feeling passed through all his hearers, and he closed his speech amidst almost unanimous applause. The effect was, however, soon counteracted by O'Connell, who exerted himself to the utmost on the occasion, and withheld no invective and no sarcasm that could subserve his cause. After two or three days' polling the victory was decided, and Fitzgerald withdrew from the contest.

Ireland was now on the very verge of revolution. The vast majority of the people had been organised like a regular army, and taught to act with the most perfect unanimity. Adopting a suggestion of Sheil, they were accustomed to assemble in every part of the country on the same day, and scarcely an adult Catholic abstained from the movement. In 1828 it was computed that in a single day two thousand meetings were held. In the

same year Lord Anglesey had warned Sir Robert Peel that the priests were working most effectually on the Catholics of the army, that it was reported that many of these were ill-disposed, and that it was important to remove the depots of recruits and supply their place by English or Scotch men. The contagion of the movement had thoroughly infected the whole population. The influence of the landed aristocracy and property on the electorate seemed everywhere giving way. If concession had not been made, almost every Catholic county would have followed the example of Clare; and the Ministers, feeling further resistance to be hopeless, brought in the Emancipation Bill, confessedly because to withhold it might kindle a rebellion that would extend over the length and breadth of the land, and would certainly make the administration of justice almost impossible in cases in which political or religious considerations were involved.

It was thus that this great victory was won by the genius of a single man, who had entered on the contest without any advantage of rank, or wealth, or influence, who had maintained it from no prouder eminence than the platform of the demagogue, and who terminated it without the effusion of a single drop of blood. The King was so bitterly hostile that almost at the last moment he refused his consent, and only yielded when he found it impossible to construct a ministry to carry out his views. The House of Lords had for many years been hostile to the Catholic claims, and there is little doubt that the majority of the people in Great Britain agreed with it. Toryism, which had once had some leaning to the Church of Rome, was now deeply imbued with the No Popery spirit. The Evangelical movement had intensified it, evoking much of the old passion of Puritanism. The pulpits of England resounded with

denunciations. The Dissenters appear to have been generally hostile, and even after the Clare election the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London and Durham, speaking as the representatives of the Established Church, declared their implacable opposition to the removal of Catholic disabilities.

Over all these obstacles O'Connell triumphed. The most eminent advocates of emancipation had fallen away from and disavowed him. He had devised the organisation that gave such weight to Irish opinion; created the enthusiasm that inspired it; applied to political affairs the priestly influence that consecrated it. With the exception of Sheil no man of commanding talent shared his labours, and Sheil was conspicuous only as a rhetorician. He gained this victory not by stimulating the courage or increasing the number of the advocates of the measure in Parliament, but by creating another system of government in Ireland, which overawed all his opponents. He gained it at a time when his bitterest enemies held the reins of power, and when they were guided by the most successful statesman of his generation, and by one of the most stubborn wills that ever directed the affairs of the nation. If he had never arisen, emancipation would doubtless have been at length conceded, but it would have been conceded as a boon, and it would have been almost certainly accompanied and qualified by the veto. It was the boast of O'Connell that his Church entered into the constitution triumphant and unshackled—an independent and most formidable power that could visibly affect the policy of the Empire.

It was a great personal triumph, but certainly the Relief Bill was not won in the way which was most beneficial to the Empire, or indeed to Ireland. Of all possible measures, Catholic Emancipation might, if

judiciously carried, have been most efficacious in allaying agitation and making Ireland permanently loyal. Had it been carried in 1795—as it would have been if Pitt had not recalled Lord Fitzwilliam—the country might possibly have been spared the rebellion of 1798, and all classes might have rallied cordially round the Irish Parliament. Had it been carried at, or soon after, the Union—as it would have been if Pitt had dealt with it in a different spirit—it might have assuaged the bitterness which that measure caused, and produced a cordial amalgamation of the two nations. Even after this time there had been opportunities when the policy of Grattan and Plunket might have prevailed, and when emancipation might have been carried without any serious social or political convulsion, and accompanied by substantial guarantees of the loyalty of the priesthood.

It was delayed until sectarian feeling on both sides, and in both countries, had acquired an enduring intensity, and it was at last conceded in a manner that produced no gratitude, and was the strongest incentive to further agitation. There could be no worse precedent in Ireland than the concession of a great measure of justice forced from its opponents by the threat of anarchy and civil war. The fever of agitation passed into the system of the nation, and all the ties of property and rank were giving way. The Irish landed gentry had grown up under circumstances which were in many respects extremely unfavourable and demoralising, and which left indelible traces on their character, but no candid judge could assert that they were altogether without qualities of a high order. The noble efflorescence of political and oratorical genius among Irishmen in the last quarter of the century, the perfect calm with which great measures for the relief of the Catholics which would have been impossible in England were re-

ceived in Ireland; above all the manner in which the volunteer movement was organised, directed, and controlled, are decisive proofs. On the Catholic question they were certainly less bigoted than the corresponding class in England, and there was a time when their people readily followed them. But the political leadership, even of the most liberal, was now fatally weakened, and the substitution of the priests for the landlords as the leaders of the people was rapidly advancing. 'I have polled all the gentry and all the 50*l.* freeholders,' wrote Mr. Fitzgerald to Sir R. Peel when giving an account of his defeat, 'the gentry to a man.' 'All the great interests broke down, and the desertion has been universal.' The attitude the landlord class afterwards assumed during the agitation for repeal completed the change, and they never regained their old position.

The extreme violence of O'Connell during this controversy and the democratic character he had given to Catholic policy alienated from him many of the most moderate and respectable of his own co-religionists, as well as of the Protestant supporters of Catholic Emancipation. All that can be said on this subject is that if he had adopted a different tone he never could have achieved what he had accomplished, and surely the larger part of the blame must attach to those who by delaying the concession made such means indispensable to success. It is a curious fact that immediately after the triumph of Catholic Emancipation, O'Connell was blackballed at an English Catholic club. With the English Catholics, indeed, he never was popular, and he was accustomed laughingly to say that the great defect of the Emancipation Act was that it did not exclude them. At the same time a large proportion of the leading gentry of Ireland—among others the Duke of Leinster—so far supported him, while he was on

excellent terms with several of the Whig leaders in England.

In 'The Greville Memoirs' there is an interesting sketch of O'Connell as he appeared at this time. Greville himself had not then met him, but he formed his judgment from a very competent friend, who had been in Ireland during the recent struggle. He noticed that O'Connell and Sheil at heart disliked one another, though Sheil did not venture to oppose O'Connell. There were many in the Catholic Association who would like to thwart him, but with the great masses of the people he was omnipotent, and no one had a chance of supplanting him. As an orator he would probably fail in the House of Commons, but in addressing a mob, and especially an Irish mob, he was unequalled. He knew exactly the style and manner that suited their taste. He was, however, much more than a mere adventurer or mob orator. He had large landed property, stood at the head of his profession, was an admirable lawyer, a man of high moral character and great probity in private life. He was one of the hardest of workers, rising at 3 A.M. and going to bed at 8. He had a strong desire to reform his profession. He constantly gave legal assistance gratuitously to the poorer members of his creed. If his language was violent, it should at least be remembered that he himself had long been the object of the most scurrilous abuse, and also that he was obliged to speak to the Irish in the strain to which they were used and which pleased them. 'Had he never been violent he would not be the man he is, and Ireland would not have been emancipated.' Greville met him for the first time at dinner in 1829, and found him, in society, not at all remarkable, but 'lively, well-bred and at his ease.'

The belief that he would almost certainly fail in the

British House of Commons, and that this would react greatly upon his position in Ireland, appears to have been very general among the best judges. The House of Commons at this time contained several men of brilliant oratorical and debating powers, but with scarcely an exception they had entered it—usually for small boroughs—at a very early age, and had attained their position by long training in the tone and methods of English parliamentary life. O'Connell was now fifty-four, and although he had been for many years a prominent politician and orator, he had lived in an atmosphere which was the worst preparation for a parliamentary career. The kind of speaking which is most effective before an Irish jury, and the kind of speaking which delights and sways an Irish mob, were as far as possible removed from that of a skilful parliamentary debater, and, as O'Connell well knew, he was entering a House which was deeply prejudiced against him.

'I do not fear firebrands in this House,' Canning had once said; 'as soon as they touch its floor they hiss and expire,' and the first proceeding of O'Connell after his election was well fitted to strengthen the misgivings of his friends. There was not much doubt that the construction of the Emancipation Act excluded him from Parliament without a re-election, but the question was at least susceptible of legal argument, and O'Connell determined to dispute it. He first went down to the Catholic Association and announced his intentions in a long speech. It was in his worst style of mob oratory, boastful, arrogant and coarse. He was going, he said, to the House to defy the base offal of his own profession; the representatives of the rotten boroughs and corrupt aristocracy of the Empire. He would beard the Speaker in his den; if the Speaker decided against his right to sit, he would show him how poor a lawyer

he was. He would ask the Speaker what rotten borough had sent him to adjudicate upon the rights of the representatives of the people. He would go to the English Parliament, attended by the aristocracy and gentry of Ireland, and no country could boast of a nobler aristocracy. No member in his presence would dare to revile his country or insult his creed. Speaking of this kind might be well calculated to win the applause of the audience to which it was addressed, but it needed no great sagacity to predict that in the House of Commons it would be absolutely fatal to a parliamentary career.

To those who would understand O'Connell's power and the versatility on which it so largely depended, it is instructive to compare his promises to the Catholic Association with his speech on the same subject at the bar of the House. This speech at once established his parliamentary position. Clear, pointed, admirably reasoned and admirably arranged, without the slightest tinge either of egotism or declamation or bad taste, it was a legal argument of the best kind, delivered with perfect simplicity of gesture, with consummate beauty of voice and with complete self-possession of manner. There appears to have been but one opinion of its merits, and from this time no one doubted that O'Connell could at once take a leading place in the House of Commons. He often at later periods offended it, sometimes by things he said in it, more frequently by things he said or did outside its walls which were referred to in debate, but quite apart from the considerable voting power at his disposal he could always command its attention, and he was always a leading figure in its debates. Roebuck, who was no bad judge of parliamentary oratory, pronounced him the first orator of his generation, and it is certainly no exaggeration to say that he con-

tended on equal terms with the very best. His boundless readiness, his power of terse, nervous, Demosthenic reasoning, his thorough mastery of the subjects he treated, the skill with which he condensed and pointed his case, and the rich flow of his humorous or pathetic eloquence, placed him at once in the foremost rank. His speeches were usually short, condensed and completely spontaneous, and they were marked by unfailing lucidity and by great quickness in argument and repartee. They were sometimes, it is true, much defaced by violence, exaggeration, and bad taste. He never won the respect of the House. He never quite caught its tone; and he never aspired to the highly polished rhetoric of Macaulay or Sheil. Peel may have surpassed him in the tact and adroitness of a debater, and Stanley may have equalled him in dialectic dexterity, in the fire of his temper and in his mastery of pure, graceful and vigorous English, but there was a commanding power in O'Connell's treatment of a great subject and a majestic roll in his simple, unadorned language, which place his greatest speeches among the masterpieces of parliamentary eloquence.

He spoke very frequently and attended closely to all parliamentary affairs. In 1833 he mentions in one of his letters that he had not missed a single day in a parliamentary session which extended to seven months. In another year it was calculated that he spoke oftener than any member except Lord Althorp, who was then leader of the House.[1] Yet he always observed the rules of the game, and though sometimes violent and indecorous, he never appears to have been himself guilty of the systematic waste of time which has in our day become so prominent.

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[1] See Smyth's *Ireland, Historical and Statistical*, iii. 446.

He spoke on all Irish subjects, but also on very many others. He was one of the most prominent advocates of parliamentary reform of the most radical description, going as far as universal suffrage, the ballot, and an elective House of Lords. He was an early and steady supporter of the emancipation of the Jews. He spoke with great force and knowledge on questions of legal reform; on the importance of cheapening, simplifying, and codifying the law, of multiplying local tribunals, of abolishing obsolete forms and phraseology. He was an ardent advocate of the abolition of capital punishment. He wished to change the law of bequests, so as to make it obligatory on parents to leave at least half their property among their children. He supported the abolition of the Usury Acts, and agreed with Bentham about the folly of attempting to regulate the rate of interest by law. He spoke in favour of the abolition of flogging in the army; of the abolition of the taxes on knowledge; of the complete abolition of the game laws.

He was a steady and most vehement opponent of slavery, and he showed his hatred of it when to do so seemed very contrary to his immediate interests. In spite of his strong democratic leaning in favour of widely diffused representative government, he deplored that the extension of self-government to the colonies had been opposed to the interests of the negroes, as more was done in the direction of emancipation when the colonies were under the immediate control of the Crown than when they were governed by colonial legislatures. He opposed violently and persistently the grant of twenty millions to the slave-owners in the West Indies at the time when their slaves were emancipated. During his repeal agitation it was very important to him to obtain American support, and a consid-

erable proportion of the contributions to the agitation came from America; but he offended bitterly great sections of American opinion by his unqualified denunciations of negro slavery. Subscriptions from slave-owners were refused by the Repeal Association, and no remonstrance could induce O'Connell to refrain from expressing, both at anti-slavery meetings and also in the House of Commons, his abhorrence of slavery and his contempt for a Government which protected it, while placing in the forefront of its Constitution a declaration that all men were born equal and free. When he was remonstrated with upon the imprudence of throwing away a support which might be useful to his cause, he replied: 'I would rather have one Irish landed proprietor of weight than all their slave-breeders. It is ourselves alone must work out repeal.'[1]

In foreign politics he was chiefly guided by Catholic interests. The Emperor Nicholas of Russia was the object of his special abhorrence, on account of his treatment of Poland and of Catholics. He described him as 'the Monster Nicholas,' 'the greatest persecutor of Catholicity who has lived since the days of Diocletian.'[2] He was an enthusiastic eulogist of the insurrection of Belgium against Holland, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Catholic liberal movement on the Continent. He was also an uncompromising advocate of free trade in all its forms, including the complete abolition of the Corn Laws. His policy on this question is very remarkable, for Ireland had a special interest in the question, which O'Connell seems never to have understood. Nothing was more contrary to his desire than that her population should be greatly diminished and that she

[1] O'Neill Daunt, *Personal Recollections of O'Connell*, i. 287.

[2] *Letter to Lord Shrewsbury*, p. 101.

should be turned into a great pastoral country, yet nothing is more clear than that the abolition of the Corn Laws, depriving her of her preferential position in the corn market of England, made such a change inevitable. O'Connell argued the question on the crudest and also the most extreme lines, treating any tax on food as simply immoral. In his letter to Lord Shrewsbury he accused that Catholic nobleman of having 'stained Catholicity itself with the guilt of that sordid monopoly.' 'The provision tax,' he wrote, 'is in its nature most criminal. It is murderous. It is the most direct violation of the first principles of justice. . . . It is in itself so radically oppressive and unjust that it is incapable of moral mitigation. . . . The protected person, by the voice of the Corn Laws, addresses the workman: "You shall not buy your breakfast, though you have your own hard-earned money to buy it with, until you have first paid *me* a heavy tax for liberty to purchase."' It is curious to find him in the same letter deploring the depopulation of Ireland by 'landlords who cleared their farms of human beings to augment the number of oxen and swine.' He was a powerful opponent of the income-tax, though Peel, who imposed it, refused to extend it to Ireland, and no one put more clearly or more forcibly the unequal incidence of the tax falling on incomes derived from precarious professional incomes and from settled property. A clerkship in a merchant's office at a salary of 200*l.* a year would not sell for more than 100*l.* A fee-simple estate of 200*l.* a year would in England sell for 6,000*l.* Yet the clerk and the fee-simple owner will pay the same income-tax. He predicted also that the tax, once adopted in England, would speedily be extended to Ireland, and he was provoked that the Irish people failed to realise how inevitably this assimilation would be carried out.

PART II

The course O'Connell adopted after the great triumph of 1829 forms the turning point of his career. There can be no doubt that it was of the highest possible importance both to Ireland and to the Empire that the fierce agitation which had arisen should be calmed down, and that the Catholics who entered Parliament should acquiesce in the conditions of parliamentary life and falsify the predictions of their enemies. It is equally certain that O'Connell had not the least desire to lay aside the sceptre and to allow the agitation he had created to languish.

It is not very easy to judge equitably his conduct at this period. In England and by some of the most eminent judges it was ascribed to the meanest motives. 'If he had ceased agitating,' Lord Clarendon once wrote, 'when emancipation was carried, he would have been as great a man in his way as Washington, but he continued it for purposes most mischievous as regards the people and most selfish as regards himself. His whole object was money and power; the latter in order to make it subservient to the former.'

That a large element of personal ambition entered into his conduct will hardly, I think, be denied by those who study his intimate correspondence. He had risen by his own unassisted power to a position unexampled in Europe, and incarnated in himself, as hardly any man had ever done before, the passions, wishes, and aspirations of the great masses of his countrymen, and he had a keen delight in the exercise of his power. No

one appreciated more what, in a letter to his wife, he called 'All the racy triumphs at the success of agitation which an agitator by profession can alone enjoy.'[1] His energy was inexhaustible. He delighted in being continually in the mouths of men, and in exercising that power of swaying great crowds which is at once one of the most intoxicating and one of the most dangerous of human gifts. A great abdication of popularity and power was a thing which was wholly alien to his nature. Grattan was capable of it, but his patriotism was of a very different temper, and it is worthy of note that O'Connell always blamed the conduct of Grattan after his triumph in 1782, and always maintained that Flood had acted with the truer insight into the needs of the country. Fitzpatrick has related, apparently on the best authority, the following characteristic anecdote. On the night when Catholic Emancipation was carried one of O'Connell's friends slapped him on the shoulder, exclaiming, 'Othello's occupation's gone!' 'Gone!' cried the Liberator, with an arch smile; 'isn't there a Repeal of the Union?'[2]

He was at this time also violently exasperated with the government of Wellington and Peel. He very naturally considered that he owed them no gratitude for emancipation, and he detested both with all the fervour of his nature. His language about Wellington in public was abundantly violent, but it paled before that of his private letters. 'If Wellington be made Prime Minister, all the horrors of actual massacre threaten us. That villain has neither heart nor head.' 'He is perhaps the only "great man" the world ever saw who had not one single trait of patriotism, and never exhibited one generous or noble sentiment either in expression

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 126.

[2] Ibid. ii. 229.

or in deed.'[1] Such was his estimate of the greatest of living Irishmen, of a statesman who with many limitations brought at least to public life an absolute disinterestedness and an inflexible sense of duty that have never been surpassed in English history.

Many things, indeed, had conspired to provoke O'Connell—the clause in the Emancipation Act which obliged him to return to his constituents for re-election; the suppression of the Catholic Association; the suppression of the 40*s.* freeholders, who would now have been the most powerful weapon in his hands; a temporary but most arbitrary Act giving the Lord Lieutenant power to suppress by simple proclamation any association or assembly he might deem dangerous. By the Emancipation Act the higher positions at the Bar were thrown open as well as seats in Parliament. A distribution of silk gowns naturally followed, and while several Roman Catholic barristers obtained this distinction, O'Connell, who on purely professional grounds incontestably held the foremost position, was passed over. Among those who obtained a silk gown was Sheil, who had been his ablest co-operator in the recent struggle.

The disfranchisement of the 40*s.* freeholders appeared peculiarly ungracious when they had just for the first time displayed a real independence. It was, however, a measure of great national importance. It lessened the overwhelming preponderance of the Roman Catholic electorate. It struck off a number of voters who were far too ignorant and too abjectly poor to be safely

[1] Fitzpatrick i. 140; ii. 145. He appears, however, to have acquiesced in a project chiefly started by the Duke of Leinster for a testimonial to Wellington in recognition of his conduct about emancipation in 1829. By Wellington's desire the project was abandoned. Fagan, *Life of O'Connell*, i. 686.

trusted with the exercise of political power, and it in some degree checked the fatal tendency to subdivision of land. The power given to the Lord Lieutenant of proclaiming meetings was in the disturbed condition of the country perhaps necessary, and at all events it was a governing instrument of real efficacy. But the slight thrown upon O'Connell as an advocate was a mere idle insult, evidently designed to mark the reprobation with which the ministers regarded his career, and the obligation imposed on him of going again to his constituents for election might without difficulty have been avoided. Peel, it is true, has left a defence of this measure. He very solemnly denies that it was due to personal jealousy or pique. It was intended, he said, to conciliate the opponents of concession; and with the King, the House of Lords, and probably the majority of the English people opposed to emancipation, something of the kind was required. But it was a proceeding which in a most critical moment had the effect of irritating the Roman Catholics to the utmost without in any degree diminishing their power, and of completely preventing the pacific effects that concession might naturally have had. It was manifestly directed personally against O'Connell. It was, of course, utterly impotent, for O'Connell was at once re-elected, but it was accepted by him and by the whole people as an insult and a defiance.

In estimating the political character of Sir R. Peel, it must never be forgotten that on the most momentous question of his time he was for many years the obstinate opponent of a measure which is now almost universally admitted to have been not only just, but inevitable; that his policy having driven Ireland to the verge of civil war, he yielded the boon he had so long refused simply to a menace of force; and that he accompanied the

concession by a display of petty and impotent provocation which deprived it of half its utility and of all its grace.

The exasperation of O'Connell was extreme. He denounced the ministry of Wellington and Peel with reckless violence, endeavoured in 1830 and 1831 to embarrass it by mischievous letters recommending a run upon gold, revived the Catholic Association under new names and forms, and energetically agitated for the repeal of the Union.

In addition, however, to these personal considerations there is one of another kind which may be urged in explanation and palliation of O'Connell's proceedings after 1829, and which has not, I think, been sufficiently considered in England. The mass of the Irish Catholics had been brought to a state of frenzied excitement which was in the highest degree dangerous and extremely likely to break out into armed rebellion. All the confidential correspondence of the Government as well as the language of independent writers attests the fact. Greville, describing the situation, says that O'Connell believed that he could keep the country quiet for another year, but that Dr. Doyle, the ablest of the Catholic bishops, feared and believed that this was impossible. The prevailing feeling of the great ignorant masses in Ireland was undoubtedly that the victory they had achieved was only the forerunner of an armed rebellion which was to break down English dominion in Ireland. The constant question, it was noticed, among them was, 'When will the Counsellor call us out?'[1] Whatever may be said in other respects against O'Connell, two things were always among the foremost objects of his life. One was to convince his fellow-countrymen of the folly and the criminality of secret illegal

[1] O'Neill Daunt's *Recollections*, ii. 137.

associations and agrarian crimes. The other was to prevent the political movement from degenerating into armed rebellion. His power of restraining the people was truly wonderful, more wonderful even than his power of exciting them, but he restrained them by flattering them, by humouring them, by using the kind of inflammatory language they liked ; by often yielding to their pressure. If in this moment of fierce passion and on the morrow of a great triumph, which had not been conceded to argument, but wrung by popular pressure from a hostile ministry which was still in power, he had adopted a quiescent or passive or temporising policy, is it likely that he would have retained his power of control ? Is it not probable that other and more violent men would have taken his place, and that instead of a repeal agitation Ireland would have drifted into another rebellion ?

Altogether, apart from the repeal question, there were grievances which a fervent Catholic whose great object was to break down Protestant ascendency, and who found himself the master of a political organisation of tremendous power, could not possibly have neglected. The Irish system of tithes and the Vestry Act, which enabled Protestants to tax Catholics for the repair of Protestant churches, were the most prominent; and, beside these, there was much to be objected to in the agrarian laws and in the exclusively Protestant administration of justice. O'Connell always attached the highest importance to questions of patronage, maintaining that in Ireland the laws themselves were less important than the spirit in which they were administered. In scarcely one year since the Union had Ireland been governed by ordinary law.[1] The Habeas Corpus Act,

[1] Doubleday, *Life of Peel*, i. 482, 483.

which is perhaps the most important part of the British Constitution, was suspended in Ireland in 1800, from 1802 to 1805, from 1807 till 1810, in 1814, from 1822 to 1824.[1] In 1833, four years after Catholic Emancipation, there was not in Ireland a single Catholic judge or stipendiary magistrate. All the high sheriffs, with one exception, the overwhelming majority of the unpaid magistrates and of the grand jurors, the five inspectors-general, and the thirty-two inspectors of police were Protestants, while the chief towns were in the hands of narrow, corrupt, and, for the most part, intensely bigoted corporations. The reform of the grand jury system and of municipal government were among the objects O'Connell specially desired.

In his address to the electors of Clare when he went to the county for re-election a long list was given of the objects he undertook to achieve if sent into Parliament. It was nicknamed 'the address of the hundred promises,' and in the first draft he announced his intention to start at once an agitation for the repeal of the Union. With great difficulty, and on the earnest entreaty of some of the most important supporters of the Catholic cause, and especially of Lord Anglesey, he was induced to suppress this clause, but his intention remained unchanged. It was, as we have already seen, one of his earliest dreams, and even in the very height of the emancipation struggle he had clearly contemplated it. In 1828 he wrote to Lord Cloncurry that repeal must soon be the object.[2] In one of the last speeches he made in the Catholic Association he predicted that the repeal of oppressive laws against religion would be followed by an amalgamation of all sects and denomina-

[1] May's *Constitutional History*, ii. 270.
[2] Fitzpatrick, i. 168.

tions in Ireland, and added that without such amalgamation 'we never can procure the repeal of that odious and abominable measure, the Union.'[1] As late as January 1829 he declared that in order to accomplish repeal he would give up emancipation itself, and that he expected in such a struggle to meet with the co-operation of all sects and parties.[2] 'If the people will keep quiet,' he wrote in 1830, 'and allow me to regulate, I think I am certain of procuring the repeal of the Union.'[3] It was his favourite hope that he would win the great body of Irish Protestants to join with him in the new cry, and that its object might be achieved without violence or disturbance. 'We never,' he wrote, 'can repeal the Union, which every day becomes more and more pressing, except by keeping clear of any illegality whatsoever.'[4]

He sometimes spoke as if he was pushed on irresistibly by the popular feeling behind him. He described himself as a straw floating on a stream which indicated but did not make the current. 'Believe me,' he said, 'there is an under-swell in the Irish people which is much more formidable than any sudden or showy exhibition of irritation.' But the truth is that he was pressing on the agitation with all his power. 'This,' he wrote, 'is emphatically the moment to get as many places as possible to petition for the repeal of the Union.'[5] If O'Connell had not raised the cry of repeal it is probable that it would never have become formidable, though it is also true, as O'Connell clearly saw, that with the exception of the abolition of tithes this was the one question on which the great mass of the people could be speedily and genuinely aroused—

[1] Fagan, i. 625.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Fitzpatrick, i. 232.
[4] Fitzpatrick, i. 272.
[5] Ibid. i. 229.

the one chord that would be responded to through the length and breadth of Catholic Ireland.

He had, however, abundant evidence that a movement for repeal would be of a very different kind from a struggle for Catholic Emancipation. In that struggle the Catholics could count on the general support of the whole body of the English Whigs, of a considerable section of the English Tories, including, as Sir Robert Peel noticed, most of the rising men of ability, and also of a large and perhaps preponderating section of the English press, but all classes of Englishmen of any weight saw in the repeal movement a movement for the disruption of the Empire, and the struggle for repeal would naturally divide the two islands and throw the whole popular sentiment of Ireland in opposition to England. To the Whig party, who had for long years sacrificed power and influence for the Catholic cause, nothing could be more mortifying. They had steadily maintained that the admission of Catholics to Parliament would be at once a just, safe, and moderate measure, which would pacify Ireland and strengthen and consolidate the Empire. They now found it made the starting point of a new and far more dangerous agitation for breaking up the Imperial Parliament. Nor were the effects on the internal condition of Ireland likely to be less serious. By an inversion of parties, which seems at first sight strange, but which was in truth very natural, nearly all those who had most strenuously opposed the Union when it was orginally carried were equally strenuous opponents of repeal. The Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century, as we have seen, was something like an enlarged grand jury, or like the present Synod of the disestablished Church. It represented in the highest degree the property, and especially the landed property, as well as the intelli-

gence of the country. It placed the management of Irish affairs in the hands of the Irish aristocracy and resident landlords, with a large admixture of the leading Protestant lawyers; but their power was qualified by an inordinate number of nomination boroughs directly or indirectly under Government control.

There was no inconsistency in maintaining that in the peculiar condition of Ireland such a Parliament was, or might be made, a very efficient instrument of government, while a purely democratic Parliament in which the poorest and most ignorant Roman Catholics would have an overwhelming power, and which would certainly be governed for some years by a statesman who advocated manhood suffrage and vote by ballot, would be ruinous to property, to Irish Protestantism, to the maintenance of order, to the connection with England. Only five years after the Union the Speaker Foster, who had been its most powerful adversary, opposed Catholic Emancipation in the Imperial Parliament on the ground that it was likely to be speedily followed by an agitation for repeal; that a Catholic and democratic Parliament such as could then alone be established would be a body in which neither loyalty nor property would prevail, and that seeds of separation would be sown in the struggle which might lead to the complete disruption of the connection with England. In 1800 the Orangemen had been fiercely hostile to the Union. They were now more perfectly organised in Ulster and more powerful than ever, and they were prepared to resist repeal even by force. O'Connell had taken great pains to conciliate them, but altogether without success, and he at last abandoned his efforts as useless.

Still more significant was the attitude of the more moderate Irish gentry who had in general favoured

Catholic Emancipation, but who deprecated a repeal agitation as aiming at an unattainable object, and certain to be in the highest degree detrimental to the tranquillity and prosperity of Ireland. A paper called the Leinster Declaration was signed by the Duke of Leinster and by a long list of the leading gentry in Ireland expressing these views in powerful but moderate language, while at the same time it urged the Imperial Parliament to undertake a searching and immediate inquiry into the state of Ireland, and adopt measures calculated to ensure her general and permanent improvement.

The best and ablest men of O'Connell's own persuasion, including many who were ultimately forced into the repeal movement, held similar views. His brother John utterly disapproved of the new agitation, and predicted that if repeal were accomplished 'separation must follow, or what would be almost as bad—a constant collision between the two Parliaments, and as a matter of course a ferment would be kept up in this unfortunate country which would preclude any chance of employment for our people or improvement in the country.'[1] Thomas Moore, the one great Catholic man of letters modern Ireland has produced, had once been a warm friend of O'Connell. He was keenly interested in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, and had supported it in many admirable writings in verse and prose; but he now told O'Connell that the effect of the repeal agitation was 'to divide the upper classes and madden the lower,' and there are many indications that after 1829 he came to form a very low opinion of the character of his great fellow-countryman. By his language and conduct he said O'Connell had lowered the

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 211.

standard of public men in Ireland ; his vow not to fight a duel would have been very respectable if he had placed a decent control over his own words ; but it, in fact, only meant that he claimed 'a power of bullying with impunity,' the very last thing to be encouraged in Ireland, and he believed that a strong personal element mingled with and tainted his patriotism. The beautiful poem written in 1834, beginning 'The dream of those days when first I sung thee is o'er,' was directed against O'Connell and was bitterly resented by him.[1] Sheil also long shrank from the repeal agitation, and in private expressed himself with much bitterness about O'Connell, and especially about the imperiousness with which he bore down all resistance and disregarded all advice. 'This man of the people,' he is once reported to have said, 'would in his heart like to be the irresponsible vizier of an imbecile autocrat.' Much the foremost man at this time in the Catholic Episcopacy was Dr. Doyle. He was a man of high and austere character, of genuine patriotism, and of great and commanding, though somewhat too declamatory, talent. He looked upon O'Connell's position and power with undisguised alarm. Separating himself from most of the other bishops, he earnestly deprecated a repeal agitation, and he wrote to Sir H. Parnell in 1831, 'Everything should be done to gain O'Connell.' 'I am convinced that he has the power of disturbing the peace and totally deranging the affairs of this country.' 'Were I found in opposition to O'Connell,' he wrote, 'I should be deserted by the men of my own household.' He ardently desired to see O'Connell in office, for he did not believe that if he were hostile to the

[1] Moore's sentiments about O'Connell appear clearly in his *Diary*, and also in Willis's *Pencillings by the Way*.

Government it would be possible for England, in his lifetime, to govern the country.[1]

O'Connell was not quite insensible to this opposition, and he proceeded cautiously and somewhat tentatively. His pen was at this time nearly as active as his voice, and in a long letter to the people of Ireland, written in January 1830, he expanded his Clare election address, and enumerated various objects at which he intended to aim. They included a complete reform of the corporations and the grand jury system; abolition of all sinecures, and a reduction of all salaries (among others those of the judges) which had been raised during the war on account of the depreciation of the paper currency; a long series of legal reforms based on the views of Bentham, for whom he expressed an unbounded admiration, and a radical reform of Parliament. He did not ask for the disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland, or for the withdrawal from it of its churches and lands, or for a concurrent endowment of the priests, but he demanded a total abolition of tithes, a redistribution of its remaining income for the benefit of the poorer Protestant clergy, and a repeal of the Vestry Act. He expressed himself decidedly hostile to a poor law, but urged that a tax of 20 per cent. should be imposed on the estates of absentees and devoted to the relief of distress in Ireland. 'I am for the present,' he added, 'silent on the most important of all topics—the repeal of the Union. I will not bring that subject before Parliament until the combined wish of the Irish people shall demand the repeal in a voice too distinct to be misunderstood and too formidable to be trifled with.' He expressed his urgent desire that religious animosities should go down, and all classes of

[1] Fitzpatrick's *Life of Doyle*, ii. 237, 249, 271, 336.

Irishmen combine for this purpose. The present ministry in England he denounced as utterly bad, but he was resolved to take an independent line in Parliament, and not to become a member of the regular Opposition.[1] In another letter, written about the same time, to the Irish Protestants, he implored them to join with the Catholics; urged that a domestic Parliament alone could sufficiently attend to the local needs of Ireland, and disclaimed in the strongest terms the wish for any Catholic ascendency.[2] He desired, he wrote to Fitzpatrick, 'no social revolution, no social change.' He would leave the clergy for their lives their full incomes. He wished the Irish nobility to retain all the privileges they possessed before the Union, and the resident gentry all their present state. The only exceptional tax he contemplated was an absentee tax, and this he considered essential to the prosperity of Ireland.[3]

He continually in his speeches put forward the question of repeal, and among the populace at least it was eagerly responded to. There was no genuine enthusiasm about municipal or legal or grand jury reforms, but cheers for the repeal of the Union greeted him continually. The capital question in his eyes was whether he could carry the priesthood with him. During the struggle for emancipation public meetings were constantly held in the chapels, though in the diocese of Dublin Archbishop Murray had prohibited them in the churches which were under his control.[4] It was assumed that meetings for Catholic enfranchisement had at least a semi-religious character, but when this object

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[1] Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, ii. 24–30.

[2] Ibid. ii. 23.

[3] Fitzpatrick, i. 326.

[4] Meetings were held in Dublin in the Clarendon Street Chapel, which belonged to the Carmelite friars and was not controlled by the Archbishop.

was attained a rescript from Rome absolutely forbade the use of chapels for political meetings.[1] O'Connell, however, soon convinced himself that he could win the priesthood, and either from policy or perhaps more probably from his own very sanguine disposition, he constantly in his private letters spoke as if the Irish people were irresistibly bent upon repeal, and as if its achievement was not only practicable, but certain.

He was very anxious to establish associations like those by which he had organised the Catholic movement, but the power which the new law had given to the Lord Lieutenant proved an insuperable obstacle. He first established 'a Society for the Friends of Ireland,' which proposed to draw Irishmen of all creeds together for the redress of local grievances, but also for the repeal of the Union. It was suppressed after a few weeks by proclamation. Then came in succession an 'Anti-Union Association,' and an association of 'Irish Volunteers for the Repeal of the Union,' both of which were immediately proclaimed. O'Connell next devised a series of weekly public breakfasts, where public questions were discussed, and as it was difficult to bring these under the new law, they continued for some time unmolested.

These earlier proclamations took place under the Viceroyalty of the Duke of Northumberland, and O'Connell denounced them with great vehemence, making the two successive Chief Secretaries, Lord Francis L. Gower and Sir Henry Hardinge, specially responsible. His attack on Lord F. Gower is redeemed from oblivion by a happy image which delighted the House of Commons. He pointed out how it had become almost a

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 230, 347; Fagan, ii. 278.

system to entrust the management of Irish affairs to perfectly inexperienced young politicians who had still to learn the lesson of statesmanship, and he compared this to the practice which he said existed among barbers of teaching their apprentices by making them shave beggars. The 'shave-beggar' secretaries were long spoken of in Ireland. He denounced Sir H. Hardinge in a strain of gross and empty scurrility, and threw out grave imputations on his military capacity. The old soldier at once sent him a challenge, but O'Connell, while disclaiming some of the more offensive expressions attributed to him, refused to accept it.

It must be acknowledged that it would be difficult to conceive anything more purely despotic than the power which was at this time vested in the Lord Lieutenant of suppressing at will any political association, even though there was not the smallest evidence that it was intended to excite to any breach of the law, to attack property or to injure or molest individuals. It was justified by the belief that it was of vital importance to the peace and prosperity of Ireland that it should not be convulsed by another great agitation, and also that the repeal of the Union was in itself so inconsistent with the integrity of the Empire as to justify the employment of all the resources at the disposal of the Government to prevent it. This was asserted from the very first in the most unequivocal language by Peel as the representative of the Tories, and not less emphatically by Grey, who, as the Whig leader, was soon to rise in power, and who had himself been in 1800 one of the strongest opponents of the Union.

Lord Anglesey had been Lord Lieutenant in the most critical period of the struggle for emancipation, and it was chiefly in consequence of his too evident sympathy with the Catholic cause that he was recalled

in 1829. He was at that time exceedingly popular in Ireland and on excellent terms with O'Connell. In December 1830, when the Whigs under Lord Grey came to power, he was again sent to Ireland, accompanied by a Chief Secretary who, though like most of his predecessors young and inexperienced, possessed abilities which it was impossible for O'Connell to despise. This was Mr. Stanley, afterwards Lord Derby and Prime Minister of England. In him O'Connell found a life-long opponent, who, with indomitable courage and a fierce and somewhat arrogant temper, combined debating powers that have scarcely been equalled in the House of Commons. Lord Anglesey before going to Ireland had an interview with O'Connell, and attempted to dissuade him from agitation, and to induce him to devote himself to the measures of practical reform which the Whigs were quite ready to undertake. He totally failed, and came away with the conviction that O'Connell was 'bent upon desperate agitation,' and that the question would soon be whether the Viceroy or O'Connell would govern Ireland. Nothing, O'Connell declared, would induce him to postpone a repeal agitation, and he tried to justify himself on the ground that the only way of keeping the country from rebellion was to give full scope to constitutional agitation.

'Lord Anglesey, and those by whom he was surrounded,' he wrote to one who remonstrated with him, 'know nothing of Ireland. I now tell you for a certainty that nothing but the effect of my advice and influence keeps the people from a violent course. They all know that it is my decided conviction that they should not have recourse to force, and that I will forsake them if they resort to violence. But for this you would have already a speedy but of course a sanguinary

revolution.'[1] Through O'Connell's influence Lord Anglesey was received in Dublin with the most mortifying coldness, while O'Connell himself on his arrival was welcomed with almost royal enthusiasm. The new ministry was quite as determined as that which preceded it to use every means to put down the repeal agitation. The public breakfasts, though they now professed to be for charitable purposes, were put down. The same fate attended other attempts at association, and O'Connell himself was prosecuted for an attempt to evade the King's proclamation under the recent Act, and also for conspiracy under the common law. With the consent of the Government the latter charge was withdrawn, and O'Connell, after some vacillation, pleaded guilty to the former. He was never called up for judgment, and the Act which he had broken soon after expired. It was in the course of this struggle that he retaliated by formally recommending that run upon gold which he had suggested in the preceding year.

One form of support, however, came to him in abundant measure. We have already seen how successful had been the effort to raise a large revenue during the latter phases of the struggle for emancipation. When this end was achieved, a subscription was at once started through the whole of Ireland for raising a testimonial to O'Connell, and a sum of no less than 50,000*l.* was collected.[2] It was soon followed by a proposal for a regular annual tribute, which was to be placed directly and unreservedly in his hands. The priests supported the movement and took a leading part in its collection, and its success during many years was an extraordinary proof of his wonderful popularity. It usually touched,

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 237.

[2] Fagan, i. 642; ii. 66–69.

and sometimes exceeded, 15,000*l.* a year. It is stated on the authority of one of the trustees of the fund that between 1829 and 1834 not less than 91,800*l.* was collected.[1]

The O'Connell tribute was a constant subject of taunts both in England and in Ireland, and when all due allowance is made for the expense of the collection, it must be acknowledged that O'Connell had made the profession of political agitator the most lucrative in Ireland. He does not appear himself to have suggested the tribute, but he took the keenest interest in it and gave minute directions about its organisation. Its plan was much the same as the earlier Catholic rent—a small weekly contribution to be levied from each Catholic in every parish, collected on Sundays under the direction of the priests.[2]

He has himself defended it both in Parliament and in his published letter to Lord Shrewsbury. He said that for twenty years before emancipation, and even at the time when the calls of his profession were very great, there was no day in which he did not gratuitously devote from one to two hours, and often much more, to the working out of the Catholic cause; that for four years he bore the entire expenses of the Catholic agitation without receiving contributions from others of more than 74*l.* in the whole; that since emancipation he had almost abandoned his practice at the Bar, and that in the year before emancipation his professional income had been no less than 8,000*l.*, and would probably have increased. He dilated in a strain of which he was very fond, but which Grattan certainly would not have used, on his great sacrifices to his country: 'Who shall repay me for the years of my buoyant youth

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 212.

[2] See Fitzpatrick, i. 211–212.

and cheerful manhood? Who shall repay me for the lost opportunities of acquiring professional celebrity and for the wealth which such distinctions would ensure?'[1]

There can be no reasonable doubt that these great tributes, levied over a very wide area and chiefly drawn from the poorest class, were most powerful political agencies in binding together in one great organisation the masses of the people, inspiring them with an intense enthusiasm and a common interest in the cause. They formed a kind of political thermometer, accurately marking the rise and fall of the popular feeling. They made O'Connell altogether independent of the Government, as no post it could give him would be as lucrative as his tribute, and they enabled him to bear the heavy costs of a party leader. Emancipation, by opening Parliament to Catholics, had immensely increased these costs, and by far the larger part of the O'Connell tribute appears to have been devoted to election expenses.

This was not, it is true, altogether disinterested expenditure, for one of the first uses he made of his popularity was to bring as many members of his family as possible into Parliament. In his desire to push forward his family in public life, though perhaps in nothing else, he strongly resembled Cromwell. In the first reformed Parliament there was, as he boasted, a family party of eight, consisting of three of his sons, two of his sons-in-law, his brother, his first cousin and himself. There were at the same time about forty other repeal members.[2] In this Parliament he exchanged his safe seat for Kerry for a very expensive and precarious one in Dublin, from which he was ejected in 1836 on petition. O'Connell stated that this petition was likely

[1] *Letter to Lord Shrewsbury*, p. 67. [2] Fagan, ii. 209–210.

to cost him at least 8,000*l.*, and that in addition to it he had four other petitions against members of his family to defend, and had also to bear the cost of five contested elections.[1] A special subscription was got up by the English Radicals under the auspices of Joseph Hume to defray these expenses, but it was not considered a success, as it only produced between 8,000*l.* and 9,000*l.*[2] There were after the elections of 1835 no less than thirteen petitions against repeal members, and numerous seats were for the first time attacked. In addition to election expenses, O'Connell subscribed largely to a crowd of Catholic charities and enterprises. He was always eager about getting money, but always lavish and generous in expending it, and the fact that he left only a very moderate fortune when he died shows that the great sums that he received were at least not hoarded.

He was himself a man of large private means, and with his great professional income he ought to have been a wealthy man if he had never taken to politics. His own patrimonial estate, it is true, was very small; but he had been adopted by his rich bachelor uncle Maurice, and he inherited from him, in 1825, Darrynane and a landed estate which is said to have produced at the lowest estimate 4,000*l.* a year, and he afterwards inherited a considerable amount of personal property from another uncle, Count O'Connell. But he had an enormous family—nine children, twenty-one uncles and aunts, seven married sisters[3]—and during the few months of his holiday at Darrynane he loved to keep open house. His table was often laid for thirty guests, and his hospitality was constantly shown, not only to his numerous relatives, friends, and partisans, but often

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 54. [2] Fagan, ii. 537–539. [3] Ibid. ii. 182.

to mere passing travellers, who sometimes greatly abused it. Nearly all his life he seems to have been in debt. This was partly, it is said, due to his having stood surety to a friend, but it is evident that the incurable extravagance and thriftlessness so common among his countrymen lay deep in his nature. His brother James, who was a shrewd and cynical judge, said that he was only old enough to remember his brother from the age of fourteen, but from that time he never knew him not in want of money.[1] I do not think that the common charge in England, that he was merely a 'big beggar-man,' who took up politics for the sole purpose of money, is true. He was in my judgment a man capable of passionate convictions and of an ambition far outsoaring mere pecuniary considerations, and I should much rather accept the verdict of Greville, who, calmly reviewing O'Connell's career after his death, wrote: 'His dependence on his country's bounty in the rent that was levied for so many years was alike honourable to the contributors and the recipient. It was an income nobly given and nobly earned.' At the same time those who follow his confidential correspondence can hardly fail to be painfully struck with a greed and anxiety about money matters which runs through it, especially in periods when agitation had flagged and the tribute accordingly diminished.

As the period of the great English Reform Bill approached, O'Connell, with the keen insight into the needs and opportunities of the moment which never abandoned him, silently dropped repeal and devoted all his energies to pushing on the reform cause, and endeavouring to give it a strongly marked democratic character. In 1830 he introduced a Bill for vote by

[1] Duffy's *Four Years of Irish History*, p. 399.

ballot, triennial Parliaments, and universal suffrage, but he only found thirteen supporters. During the struggle of the Reform Bill his services to the Whigs were very considerable, and they were probably the true reason why the prosecution against him was abandoned. He even claimed the merit of carrying the Bill, and it is quite true that his followers turned the closely balanced scale on the second reading in 1831, a majority both of the English and of the Scotch members having voted against it. He spoke with great power in its favour both in Parliament and in public meetings; he wrote letters in defence of it, and he rendered a still greater service by keeping Ireland quiet during the wild excitement of the dissolution of 1831. If anything resembling an insurrection had at this time broken out in Ireland, or even if the repeal question had been very prominent, it would have seriously embarrassed the English reformers.

Lord Russell relates that he was standing at the bar of the House of Lords when the King announced this memorable dissolution. Lord Lyndhurst came up to him and said, 'Have you considered the state of Ireland? do not you expect an insurrection?' or words to that effect. 'It so happened,' continues Lord Russell, 'that in going into the House of Commons I had met O'Connell in the lobby. I asked him, "Will Ireland be quiet during the General Election?" and he answered me, "Perfectly quiet." He did not answer for more than he was able to perform.'[1] Under the influence of O'Connell the question of repeal at this election was almost wholly put aside; support of O'Connell, including support of parliamentary reform, was made the sole test. It appeared as if a real alliance was being

[1] *Recollections*, p. 76.

formed between O'Connell and the Whig Government, and there was already some question about giving to O'Connell the important office of Irish Attorney-General.[1]

His relations, however, with the Government of Lord Grey soon became very troubled. Some of the new ministers were fully prepared to ally themselves with him, and Lord Duncannon, who was now at the Woods and Forests, was during almost the whole of his life on terms of warm friendship with O'Connell. But of all the Chief Secretaries of Ireland—not even excepting Peel—Stanley appears to have been the most obnoxious to O'Connell, and he assured Lord Duncannon that 'Stanley must leave Ireland or the ministry must expect to lose the support of the Irish members.' The severity with which the proclamations against associations and meetings were put in force; the employment of a very undisciplined yeomanry, largely recruited from extreme Protestants of the north, to enforce the collection of tithes; the outspoken, uncompromising language of Stanley in defence of tithes and the Vestry law and the Sub-letting Act; as well as the manner in which the patronage of Ireland was administered and the most important officials of the late Government maintained in power, exasperated him to the highest degree. In his letters to Lord Duncannon he declared that 'Lord Anglesey and Mr. Stanley have made the

[1] He writes, October 5, 1831, to his friend Barrett: '*Strictly, strictly private* and most confidential. I could be Attorney-General—and in one hour.' Fitzpatrick, i. 275. It appears from a letter of Bishop Doyle to Sir H. Parnell that the Bishop exercised his influence with O'Connell to induce him to accept office at this time. He says, 'My application to him was more successful than I anticipated, but finding how isolated the proposal of office was made to him I fully agreed with him that it should be rejected.' Ibid. p. 286. See too on these negotiations Torrens's *Life of Melbourne*, i. 394, 395.

people of Ireland Repealers. They will, if they remain, make them Separatists. In six months the connection between the two countries will have to be maintained by armed force unless they are removed.' So angry was he that for some time he, with a number of his colleagues, refused to go over to London to support the Government in the division lobby, and he declared that he was forming a separate party—a party without religious distinctions—to support Irish interests, as neither the Whigs nor the Tories would do so. The removal of Blackburne, a lawyer of great ability and determination and of strong anti-Catholic sympathies, who had been Attorney-General under the preceding ministry, and who had instituted the prosecution of O'Connell, was his first condition of support, and he desired also the removal of a number of Tory magistrates, and apparently even of lord lieutenants of counties.[1] If such changes were made, he clearly intimated that he was ready to defend the Government.

As long as Lord Grey remained at the head of affairs nothing of this kind was done. Grey had formed the worst possible opinion of O'Connell,[2] and steadily op-

[1] See his letters to Lord Duncannon, Fitzpatrick, i. 277–285.

[2] Lord Campbell speaks of Grey's 'childish dislike to O'Connell,' *Life*, ii. 49; but perhaps the strongest expression of his feelings is in one of Grey's letters to the Princess Lieven in February 1836. He predicts that the greatest difficulty of the Melbourne Ministry 'will arise from their position with respect to O'Connell,' and he proceeds, 'You know my opinion with respect to that unprincipled ruffian. As long as it can be said that in accepting his support they make no improper concessions to obtain it I have no objections to make. But how long can such a state of things endure ? . . . My own course with respect to this point is clear. I never have had and never will have any communication with a man whose conduct has been, beyond any example except that of the worst men at the beginning of the French Revolution, unprincipled and brutal. Ellice and I have had many battles on this subject, and I am afraid he does not see even now the impolicy

posed any compromise with him. The Irish Reform Bill was also a bitter disappointment. It added, it is true, five to the number of Irish representatives settled at the Union, but O'Connell maintained that with a population of nearly eight millions Ireland was entitled to thirty additional county members, and in all to not less than seventy-three additional members.[1] It opened sixteen nomination boroughs and enlarged the representation of the great towns, but the Government refused to democratise the electorate by restoring the 40*s.* franchise in the agricultural districts, and they abolished that franchise where it still existed in the towns, making the 10*l.* franchise the general rule. Had they acted otherwise they would have made O'Connell absolute master of the electorate, and both parties in the State at that time clearly saw that it was only by maintaining a high suffrage that parliamentary government could be made to work in Ireland. In a series of powerful but very angry letters addressed 'to the Reformers of Great Britain' O'Connell compared and contrasted in great detail the British and the Irish Reform Bills, maintaining that the opening of the representation of Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Galway was the only real benefit likely to follow from the Act, and that it was on the whole positively adverse to the right and power of the people to choose representatives. He contended that it would diminish instead of increasing the number of voters; that it would aggravate instead of diminishing the differences between Great Britain and Ireland; that the abolition of the 40*s.* franchise and

—might I not add the disgrace? —of even the slightest advance to conciliate (which by the way is impossible) the leader of a party whose views have no direction but to the objects of his own sordid interest or dishonest ambition.' *Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Earl Grey*, iii. 184.

[1] *Letter to Lord Shrewsbury*, p. 141.

the freeman franchise in the towns and the costly and complicated Irish system of registration would more than counterbalance any benefits it might produce. As soon as the Reform Bill was carried the repeal agitation revived.

A few words may here be said about the character of the Irish representation. It had changed greatly after Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill, and it had not changed for the better. It is a remarkable fact that in spite of the great diminution of small and venal boroughs that was a consequence of the Union, aristocratic control in the Irish representation during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century was even stronger than in England.[1] The vast majority of the constituencies were in the hands of a few great families, who either contested or arranged the representation, and most of the members were men of good birth and considerable property. The spirit of political jobbery which was so inveterate in the Irish Parliament was certainly not extinct among them, but they were on the whole a highly respectable class, who took their places unobtrusively in the different English parties, and who did nothing to disturb the character or lower the standard of parliamentary life. Among the Irish members of this period, Grattan, Plunket, Foster, Ponsonby, Newport, Henry Parnell, and Croker were all men of conspicuous weight and ability.

In two respects they gave a distinct bias to Parliament. The Irish members were strong, though not altogether unwavering, supporters of the abolition of the slave trade, and the Union was in consequence very favourable to that great cause.[2] The large majority of

[1] See May's *Constitutional History*, i. 304–305.

[2] Wilberforce's *Life*, iii. 168, 177, 212. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, ii. 490, 491, 499, 503.

them also, as well as the leading Irish Protestant families, were in favour of Catholic Emancipation, though, like Grattan, they wished it to be accompanied by the veto and by the payment of the priests. If the Catholic concession had been introduced by Pitt when the Union was carried, it was computed by the best Government authorities that at least 64 out of the 100 Irish members would have supported it, and that, in spite of the Orange movement and the passions aroused by the rebellion, it would have been generally accepted by Irish Protestant opinion.[1]

There is a very striking prediction of Peel that the introduction of Catholic members would bring a totally different element into the Irish representation, and that if, as he anticipated, the Irish Catholic members remained a distinct body with 'separate interests and separate views,' they would disturb the whole working of parliamentary government. 'The parliamentary business,' he wrote, 'would be impeded by the addition to the House of Commons of 50 or 60 members, whose only chance of maintaining their influence would be unremitting attendance in the House and violent and vexatious opposition to the progress of public business.'[2]

The opposition between O'Connell and the aristocratic element in the Catholic body and the strongly

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[1] See my *History of Ireland*, v. 450–451.

[2] Peel's *Memoirs*, i. 291. It is worthy of notice that Grattan, who always refused to recognise representation divorced from property, believed that the Catholics would be a permanent minority in the Irish representation. Considering the overwhelming amount of Irish property in Protestant hands, he believed that forty was the utmost number they could obtain. *Speeches*, iv. 335. The probable result of his Bill, he thought, would be that 'seven or eight noblemen would come into the House of Peers and perhaps ten or twenty members into the House of Commons.' Ibid. p. 404.

democratic type of politics which O'Connell had adopted had alienated and alarmed many, though even at the last stage of the struggle in 1828 a clear majority of the Irish Protestant members were in favour of concession. But it soon became an object with O'Connell to displace the old representatives by men who were absolutely subservient to himself, and the imposition of a repeal test very effectually carried out this object. O'Connell's 'Tail,' as it was always called, became considerable in the first reformed Parliament, but it never comprised the whole body of Irish Liberal representatives. There was always a Whig element of some power, and even among those who had a general sympathy with O'Connell's objects there were a few men of high character, such as Sharman Crawford and Smith O'Brien, who were certainly not blind followers. 'The Tail' consisted largely of members of his own numerous family and connections, and its other members belonged in general to a lower social stratum than their predecessors, and, with very few exceptions, they were but little respected either for their characters or abilities.[1] Sheil was the only man of conspicuous talent among them, and his allegiance was of brief duration and of a somewhat doubtful nature.

The followers of O'Connell gladly availed themselves of all periods when he was in alliance with the Government to accept office under the Crown; but in the debates on the Coercion Bills and on the Arms Bill of 1843 they were very prominent, and tactics with which in our own day we have become very familiar could be already detected. The 'Tail' combined with

[1] Many interesting particulars about the Irish representation before Catholic Emancipation and after the Reform Bill will be found in Maddyn's *Ireland and her Rulers*, i. 230–250.

English Radicals in an opposition so obstructive and so pertinacious, that it showed, in the words of Lord Palmerston, 'that a compact body of opponents, though few in numbers, may, by debating every sentence and word of a Bill and by dividing upon every debate, so obstruct its progress through Parliament, that a whole session may be scarcely long enough for carrying through one measure.'[1] In a memorandum drawn up by Peel in 1846 there is a curious passage on this subject: he speaks of the difficulty of carrying legislation in the face of 'opponents consuming the public time in speeches of two or three hours each, made solely for the purpose of delay.' 'It may be said,' he adds, 'public indignation will coerce the Irish members into decent conduct and into observance of the usages of debate. Do not trust to this. There is an Irish party —a determined and not insignificant one—for which British indignation has no terrors. Their wish is to disgust England with Irish business and with Irish members, and to induce England, through sheer disgust, and the sense of public inconvenience from the obstruction opposed to the progress of all other business in Parliament, to listen to a repeal of the Legislative Union for the purpose of purging the House of a set of troublesome and factious members who equally obstruct legislation for Ireland and for Great Britain.'[2]

The most important measure of the Grey Ministry was the foundation of the existing system of national education. It would be difficult to exaggerate its importance, or the need which it attempted to supply. Perhaps the worst part of the penal laws had been the

[1] Ashley's *Life of Palmerston*, i. 464.
[2] Peel's *Memoirs*, ii. 290–291.

provisions which shut the Catholics out from all the means of education, and the Charter Schools of Archbishop Boulter, as we have seen, were distinctly proselytising. The 'Kildare Street Society,' which received an endowment from Government, and directed national education from 1812 to 1831, was not proselytising, and it was for some time largely patronised by Roman Catholics. It is certainly by no means deserving of the contempt which some writers have bestowed on it, and if measured by the spirit of the time in which it was founded it will appear both liberal and useful. Its plan was that there should be no religious distinction in the appointment of governors or teachers, and that during the school hours no catechisms, or books or teaching of religious controversy, should be permitted, though out of school hours ministers of all denominations were allowed to teach the pupils of their own creeds without restriction. Great stress was, however, laid upon moral education. The object of the schools was stated to be united education, 'taking common Christian ground for the foundation, and excluding all sectarian distinctions from every part of the arrangement;' 'drawing the attention of both denominations to the many leading truths of Christianity in which they agree.' To carry out this principle it was a fundamental rule that the Bible must be read without note or comment in all the schools. It might be read either in the Authorised or in the Douay version. It was urged that among other advantages this rule was of vital importance in correcting the constant perjury which prevailed in Ireland. Oaths were taken upon the Testament, and one of the Roman Catholic inspectors declared before a parliamentary inquiry into Irish education that in many parts of Connaught he found multitudes of the adult population absolutely ignorant

of what the Bible was; totally unaware that it contained a Revelation of the Divine Will.[1]

The system seemed for a considerable time very popular. In 1825 there were 1,490 schools connected with the Society, containing about 100,000 pupils. The improvements introduced into education by Bell, Lancaster, and Pestalozzi were largely adopted. Great attention was paid to needlework. Two model schools were established for training masters and mistresses. In 1825 the Commissioners of Education found that there were in these schools 263 Protestants of all denominations and 434 Roman Catholics. The schools were supported by a great deal of that quiet, self-sacrificing patriotism which has always existed in Ireland side by side with and quite apart from noisy agitations. A great number of useful publications were printed by the Society, and we have the high authority of Dr. Doyle for stating that he never found anything objectionable in them.[2] The patrons of the schools when Catholics usually chose Catholic masters, and the Protestant clergy Protestant ones, but within the schools the two religions seem to have got on excellently together. But the Evangelical party, which was becoming dominant in Irish Protestantism, objected to the religious neutrality of the Kildare Street Schools, while the Catholic priesthood formally condemned the unrestricted reading of the Bible and commanded their people to abstain from them.

A new system was accordingly required, and was carried through Parliament by Stanley in 1831 and 1832. It was chiefly devised by Lord Anglesey, Plunket, Stan-

[1] Much information will be found in the fourteenth report of the *Society for Promoting Education of the Poor of Ireland* (1826).

[2] Select Committee on the Irish Poor (1830), p. 428.

ley, Blake, and Lord Cloncurry, and was intended to give the whole mass of the people a united secular education, while it offered facilities for separate religious education. It met with great opposition. The Presbyterians, though they ultimately supported it, were during the first eight years decidedly hostile, and a large proportion of the Established clergy declined to take part in any system of education in which they were not allowed to teach their pupils the Bible; they set up a rival system, supported by voluntary contributions, and thus threw the national education to a great extent into the hands of the priests. These latter were much divided, but through the wise and tolerant administration of Dr. Murray, then Archbishop of Dublin, they generally supported it. They gradually, however, became more and more Ultramontane; it became one of their great ends to prevent the members of the two religions associating, and to impregnate all teaching with their distinctive ecclesiastical tenets; and they accordingly grew very hostile to the National Board. To meet these contending fanaticisms the original system has been much tampered with. The Church education schools, in which the Bible is taught to every one, are still unassisted by the Government, but endowments have been freely given to sectarian convent schools managed by monks or nuns. Several changes, which it is not here necessary to recount, have taken place in the ordinary schools, and the great majority have ceased to give united secular education and are essentially separate and denominational, qualified, however, by a conscience clause. They have, at least, conferred upon the rising generation of Irishmen the inestimable blessing of a sound secular education, and have perhaps contributed in some degree to allay the animosity of sects.

This measure, which is due to the Whig ministry, is undoubtedly one of the most important in modern Irish history, for it met in a large degree the most pressing and urgent of Irish needs. The system was by no means perfect. It was too exclusively literary. At first, it is true, some excellent attempts were made to encourage agricultural education. As early as 1835 admirable reports were drawn up on the subject; a model farm was founded at Glasnevin in 1838 for the purpose of providing agricultural teaching for national schoolmasters. Several other agricultural training-schools and model farms were afterwards established, and itinerant teachers spread some knowledge of agriculture through the provinces. The Devon Commission of 1844 assisted the movement. But a strong opposition to State-paid agricultural education arose among the English free-traders and greatly influenced the Government. They objected to training farmers at public cost; to the State paying for, and taking a part in agricultural operations. Peel and Cardwell sympathised with these views; the model farms were nearly all given up, and the teaching of agriculture was almost restricted to mere book knowledge. In accordance with ideas that were then widely diffused the inspectors positively discouraged practical agricultural instruction as not really education.[1]

The national system was also from the first weakened, dislocated, and impeded by sectarian divisions and opposition, and it had not behind it, and it has not succeeded in creating that noble pride in knowledge and contempt for ignorance which is one of the strong-

[1] See Senior's *Journals relating to Ireland*, ii. 46–47; *Report of the Recess Committee* (1896), pp. 8–9; Smith's *Ireland Historical and Statistical*, iii. 240–244; *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural*, pp. 137–140.

est traits in the Scotch character, and which the Scotch Church has always encouraged. The extraordinary fact that after two generations of this education nearly one out of every five voters at the two last general elections of the nineteenth century professed to be unable even to read the name upon the ballot paper is a decisive proof. The tens of thousands of Irish emigrants who were flung on the American coast after the great famine were in their ignorance and their helplessness a miserable contrast to the emigrants from Teutonic and Scandinavian lands, but what little they knew was generally derived from the National Schools, and they had at least learnt within them the English tongue.

O'Connell, on the whole, supported the Government scheme of national education, but his speeches on the subject show little interest or fervour, nor does he seem in general to have greatly cared for educational questions. His genuine opinion appears to have been that the education of Catholics should be left wholly under the control of their priests.

Another very important measure of this ministry was the Tithes Composition Act,[1] making the optional Act of 1823 compulsory, and thus extending it over the whole of Ireland. It put an end finally to the gross injustice of exempting the grazing land from tithes, while the poor cottier had to pay for his small potato crop; it made the landlord responsible for the payment of tithes, authorising him to add the sum to the rent; and by this new and simpler method of collection it rendered unnecessary the tithe proctor, who perhaps of all men was the most hated in Ireland.

At another time it would have been received as a great boon, but the tithe war aiming at the complete

[1] 2 & 3 Wm. IV. c. 119.

abolition of tithes was now at its height, and Stanley's measure was intended by reforming to secure the existing tithes. O'Connell, with the whole body of the repeal members, opposed it. His speeches on the tithes question are among the most powerful he ever delivered. It should not be forgotten that he repeatedly disclaimed all wish to destroy the vested interests of the Protestant clergy. He spoke of them with respect. He acknowledged that the great majority had shown no disposition to extort their full rights, though there had been a few lamentable exceptions. He urged that by a rearrangement of the other revenues of the Church they could be compensated for the loss of tithes, and that at all events he was ready to support a measure for securing their incomes during their lifetime,[1] but subject to these life-interests he considered Church property national property, and maintained that after the death of the existing incumbents it might be justly appropriated to other purposes. His own proposal was that tithes should be 'totally abolished; not in name only, but in essence and practical reality.' 'There is no tranquillity for Ireland,' he wrote, 'until the tithe system is annihilated root and branch. There can be no compromise with it.'[2] This would probably have been the most popular solution, and he believed that it would benefit both landlords and tenants. When, however, the tithe was commuted into a land tax, other schemes, such as applying the fund to secular instruction or to building new charitable institutions, were advocated; and O'Connell appears finally to have settled upon the precise disposition which many years after his death was adopted by Gladstone in the original draft of his Church Bill. 'My plan,' he said, in

[1] See Fagan, ii. 142–144.

[2] Fitzpatrick, i. 538.

a letter to Sharman Crawford in September 1834, 'is to apply the fund in the various counties of Ireland to relieve the occupiers of land from grand jury cess, ... to defray all the expenses of dispensaries, infirmaries, hospitals, and asylums, and to multiply the number of these institutions until they become quite sufficient for the wants of the sick.'[1]

At the same time O'Connell declared that he would be content with nothing short of a complete diversion of the tithes, whether commuted or uncommuted, from the support of a Protestant establishment, and he fully justified the conspiracy that was spreading through a great part of Ireland to refuse its payment; to exhaust all legal means of evading and delaying it; to abstain from purchasing any cattle or other property seized for the non-payment. He exhorted the people, it is true, to abstain from violence, and to restrict themselves to means that were within the letter of the law. He stated that the great anti-tithe meetings were held not only without his suggestion, but when he was actually absent from Ireland;[2] but he publicly declared his own intention of never again voluntarily paying either tithe or Church cess, or purchasing any article sold for their non-payment. He described with great humour before a delighted peasant audience how, by branding the letter 'T' on the cow which was seized for tithes, it could find no purchaser and at last came back to its original owner; he enumerated the various methods by which it was possible to evade or defeat the claim; and he was always ready to place his legal services at the disposal of those who were prosecuted in tithe cases. He reminded the House of Commons that very recently great masses of Englishmen, encouraged by prominent

[1] *Annual Register*, 1835, p. 184.
[2] Cusack, *Speeches of O'Connell*, i. 298.

English politicians, had come to an agreement to refuse the payment of taxes till the Reform of Parliament was carried, and that the Quakers had uniformly allowed their property to be seized rather than pay tithes.

The state of the country was frightful. As O'Connell himself said, 'Most respectable men could not get their grass cut because they had paid tithes. The mail contractors cannot get their coaches horsed for the same reason.'[1] Repeated collisions had taken place between the police or yeomanry and the peasants in attempts to collect tithes. In one of those which took place at Newtownbarry, in June 1831, it is stated that at least seventeen persons were killed and many others seriously wounded; on another occasion not less than eighteen police, including their commanding officer, were killed and not a single conviction followed. The law was utterly paralysed.[2] The clergy, deprived of their lawful income, were thrown into the deepest distress. Government came to their assistance by advancing 60,000*l.*, in 1832, for the clergy who had been unable to collect their tithes in the preceding year, and it undertook to collect the unpaid tithes of 1831. The attempt was a signal failure. The arrears for that year were 104,000*l.*, and of that sum, after fierce conflicts and much bloodshed, the Government recovered 12,000*l.* at a cost of 15,000*l.* In great districts scarcely anyone ventured to defy the popular will by paying the tithes. It was with difficulty that the ordinary legal process of distraint was executed; and when the cattle or crops of the defaulter were put up to auction no one dared to buy them. A lawless combination, sustained by the consciousness of a real grievance, completely triumphed.

[1] Cusack, *Speeches of O'Connell*, i. 244.

[2] See on the tithe war Godkin, *Land War in Ireland*, and Alison, *History of Europe*, vol. v.

At the same time agrarian crime was raging on a gigantic scale. It was stated officially that in the single year 1832 there were more than 9,000 crimes perpetrated in Ireland which were clearly connected with the disturbed condition, and that among them were nearly 200 cases of homicide. 'Think,' said Sir R. Peel, 'of 196 murders in one year!' Agrarian crime had indeed almost taken in many districts the form of civil war. In the eyes of the peasantry it carried with it no moral stigma. It was constantly perpetrated with impunity in broad daylight, the whole population conspiring to shield the culprits.

It was chiefly connected with the great clearances which form one of the most horrible features of this dreary period of Irish history. I have noticed in the preceding pages the various influences that were contributing to the consolidation of farms and the improvement of estates, and as a necessary consequence to the displacement of vast numbers of small pauper tenantry. The policy of the Sub-letting Act was to discourage the multiplication of under-tenants, and the disfranchisement of the 40*s*. freeholders, and the violent hostility that had broken out between landlord and tenant acted powerfully in the same direction. The landlord had no longer any interest in accumulating political power by creating innumerable small tenancies. Contracts were more severely enforced; rents more punctually exacted. In some cases there was a desire shown to replace Catholic by Protestant tenants. It was urged that a great revolution in the agrarian system had become indispensably necessary for good farming and for the real prosperity of the country. But these great evictions took place in a country where there was no poor law, no Government system of emigration; where the landlords in numerous cases were far too

poor and encumbered to give substantial help to the tenants they evicted; where the employment both for agricultural and manufacturing labour was far below what was wanting to support those who required it.

A great portion of the country was in a state of hideous anarchy, and the Coercion Bill of 1833 which was intended to cope with it was one of the most severe in Irish history.[1] Its distinctive characteristic was that it struck at once against agrarian crime and against political agitation. This double character had been clearly foreshadowed in the speech delivered by the King at the opening of Parliament in February 1833. It deplored that these disturbances in Ireland had greatly increased, that violence had risen to a most fearful height, rendering life and property insecure, and defying the authority of the law, and it asked for 'such additional powers as may be found necessary for controlling and punishing the disturbers of the public peace, and for preserving and strengthening the legislative Union between the two countries, which with your support and under the blessing of Divine Providence I am determined to maintain by all the measures in my power, as indissolubly connected with the peace, security, and welfare of my people.' The Lord Lieutenant was enabled to proclaim counties as in a state of insurrection, and in these counties martial law might be proclaimed and the ordinary tribunals and trial by jury suspended. No person without permission from the authorities was allowed to appear out of doors between sunset and sunrise, and at any hour of the night houses might be searched, and if any of the inmates were absent they might be arrested, tried before a military tribunal and sentenced to transportation.

[1] 3 & 4 Wm. IV. c. 4.

Martial law being equivalent to a total suspension of the Constitution, is at all times a measure of extraordinary, though not necessarily of excessive, severity, but it appeared especially so in Ireland where the atrocities perpetrated under that law in 1798 were still vividly remembered. O'Connell related with burning eloquence several of the real or alleged miscarriages that took place at that time, and he dilated with terrible force and with terrible illustrations upon the utter want of confidence that was felt in Ireland in the administration of justice. No one who reads the great speech which he delivered on March 4, 1833, can doubt the absolutely despotic character of the system set up by the Coercion Act, and the frightful dangers of abuse that it contained. But in addition to the powers given to the Lord Lieutenant in the proclaimed districts, he had an unlimited power of putting down over the whole of Ireland all political meetings and associations of every kind. The King's speech, which foreshadowed the measure, like two preceding ones, contained a paragraph directed against O'Connell and his agitation, and the Coercion Bill appeared especially obnoxious as coming from a Whig ministry in a reformed Parliament, immediately after the Reform Bill which O'Connell had contributed not a little to carry.

It is scarcely possible, without possessing the detailed evidence which is at the disposal of a government, to pronounce with confidence upon whether the state of the country required or justified these clauses. O'Connell bitterly complained that some Irish members with whom he had a general sympathy voted for the measure on the ground that it was absolutely necessary. Lord Althorp stated publicly that there were others who, though they voted against it, acknowledged privately that necessity. 'If,' wrote Bishop Doyle, 'we are not

to have good government or wise laws—and I see no prospect of either—I prefer Lord Grey's Bill to any other less despotic measure. If we are to be subjected to a despotism, let it be the despotism of gentlemen, though but twenty-one years of age, not of the brutal *canaille* composing the Trades Unions and Blackfeet confederacies. The honest and industrious people of this country will suffer less and prosper more under the iron rule of the constituted authorities—let these be whom they may—than under the yoke of the impious and seditious who now torment them, and drive them into all manner of folly and excess.'[1]

It is not surprising that the Whig Coercion Bill exasperated O'Connell to the highest degree, and at no period of his career was his language more violent than during the ministry of Lord Grey. It was at this time that he talked of 'the base, bloody and brutal Whigs;' describing them as men 'with brains of lead and hearts of stone and fangs of iron.' He denounced the King's speech and the address in reply to it as 'brutal and bloody.' He declared that the Whigs 'had always proved the bitterest enemies of Ireland.' It was they who violated the Treaty of Limerick; who enacted the penal laws, who devised the Insurrection Act of 1807, which was the precursor and in some respects the model of the new Coercion Bill, and 'the Whigs of the present day were only treading in the steps of the same party which had gone before them.' The part, however, of the Bill which was most obnoxious to him was naturally that which was directed against all political activity. The repeal of the Union, he said, whether it was wise or the reverse, was an object at which it was perfectly constitutional to aim. If it had been consti-

[1] *Life of Dr. Doyle.* ii. 452.

tutional before 1800 to advocate a Union, it was equally constitutional after 1800 to advocate its repeal. It was simply a question of repealing an Act of Parliament. Parliament had an undoubted right to effect it and the people had an equally undoubted right to petition for it. It was not a new question. It had been agitated in 1810 and 1817; in 1830 under a Tory government; in 1831 under a Whig government; but the agitations had been suspended when the Reform Bill had been brought in, in the hope that a reformed Parliament would redress the wrongs of Ireland, and, he added, 'I have little doubt that it would have been totally given up when the Irish Reform Bill was brought in had that Bill been framed in a spirit of fairness and equality.' The repeal movement was started on the supposition that without a domestic parliament there could be no real equality between England and Ireland, and no speedy redress of Irish grievances; and the present Bill, welcomed by the first reformed Parliament, was its fullest justification and would be the most powerful argument for its continuance. This portion of the Bill, he said, was, in fact, directed against a single individual—himself. Agrarian and tithe disturbances were chiefly reigning in one of the four provinces of Ireland. The area of disturbance was much smaller than it had been in 1824, when no less than sixteen counties were affected, and yet the provisions suppressing all political liberty extended over the whole of Ireland.

He denied with great emphasis that predial insurrection had anything to do with political agitation; 'predial agitation subsisted for forty years before political agitation commenced.' He said—and in this respect with much truth—that he had uniformly urged the people to avoid disturbances and to keep strictly within the limit of the law, and had uniformly re-

garded outbursts of crime as the most formidable obstacle to his policy. 'The fact is that political agitation is calculated to stop predial agitation,' and he contended with many illustrations that as political agitation extended, predial agitation diminished; that some of the worst periods of agrarian crime had been periods of complete political apathy; that some of the periods in which political agitation was most active had been singularly free from crime.

He concluded a speech, which should be read by all who desire to understand O'Connell and his times, by a peroration of passionate invective, which clearly shows the course which Irish popular feeling was taking. He called upon the House, if it would preserve the connection and conciliate Ireland, to remember that this connection 'has never yet conferred a single blessing upon the country; that she knows nothing of you but by distress, forfeitures and confiscations; that you have never visited her but in anger; that the sword of desolation has often swept over her as when Cromwell sent his 80,000 to perish; that you have burdened her with grinding penal laws despite the faith of treaties, and that you have neglected to fulfil the promises you made her. You have, it is true, granted Catholic Emancipation, but twenty-nine years after it was promised, and twenty-five years after the Parliament of Ireland must of necessity have done so. We know you as yet but in our sufferings and our wrongs, and you now give us as a boon this Act which deprives us of trial by jury and substitutes courts-martial; which deprives us of the Habeas Corpus Act, and, in a word, imposes on a person the necessity of proving himself innocent. That Act you give us, and you tell us it will put down the agitation for the repeal of the Union.'[1]

[1] Cusack, *Speeches and Letters of O'Connell*, i. 313–356.

The Coercion Bill, though introduced by Lord Althorp, was chiefly carried through Parliament by Stanley, and he conducted his case with consummate eloquence and skill. The great speech in which he described the crime and violence then existing in Ireland and the inflammatory language which had been used in Ireland by O'Connell, and still more by O'Connell's followers, had an extraordinary influence upon his hearers, and was long remembered as one of the finest specimens of parliamentary eloquence. He declared that O'Connell, while professing to support the law and conciliate the Protestants of Ireland, spared no pains to excite the passions of his countrymen, and to assail every member of the Government with an abuse disgraceful not to them but to him who uttered it and yet claimed the character of a gentleman, and this strain was not the mere ebullition of a momentary passion but was to be found in his deliberately printed letters. Speaking of his own experience, he observed that O'Connell in all his speeches in Ireland never once called him an Englishman, but always applied to him the opprobrious epithet as he meant it, and as his audience understood it, of Saxon. Macaulay spoke on the same side, and Sir Robert Peel and the whole Tory party supported the Government. O'Connell had little real help, except from Sheil, and he had to face a bitterly hostile House, and interruptions sufficient to disconcert any less practised orator.

The battle lasted for eleven days, and the Coercion Bill of 1833 was at last carried by 466 to 87, and on its third reading by 363 to 84. The extraordinary vigour and eloquence of O'Connell's opposition were not, however, wholly wasted. A strong feeling against the political clauses of the measure grew up among many supporters of the Government, and when, in 1834, it

was proposed to renew them there was a division in the Cabinet and a long and angry dispute, which ended in their abandonment and at the same time in the resignation of Lord Grey.

Much remedial legislation for Ireland was carried in the early days of the reformed Parliament, and changes were made in the administration of the country which O'Connell appears to have valued little less. In the spring of 1833 Stanley was promoted to the Secretaryship of the Colonies, and Littleton took his place as Chief Secretary for Ireland. The prosecution instituted by Blackburne against O'Connell was dropped. In the summer of the same year Lord Anglesey, broken in health and spirits, resigned the Viceroyalty, pursued even into his retirement by the frantic, mendacious abuse[1] of O'Connell. He was replaced by Lord Wellesley, who was father-in-law to the new Chief Secretary and was believed to be greatly under his influence. A few other less important changes were at the same time made. The great and dangerous question of the position of the Protestant Established Church was dealt with—not, indeed, on the drastic lines which O'Connell desired, but still with considerable effect. The Vestry Act, which enabled a Protestant vestry to tax the immense Catholic majority of a parish, in which there were often not a score of Protestants, for the repairs of the parish church, for communion wine and for some other purposes, was repealed, thus removing a most real grievance and one which was bitterly resented; and the Church Temporalities Act, which was

[1] See O'Connell's *Second Letter to his Constituents.* 'There was more human blood shed in Ireland during the two and a half years of the Anglesey-Stanley Administration than during any other ten years of our wretched story.' Cusack, ii. 416.

originated by Stanley, effected at the same time a considerable change in the internal condition of the Church, by suppressing ten bishoprics as well as a number of minor dignitaries. Considerable reductions were made in the revenues of the other bishoprics; a tax was imposed on livings of more than 300*l.* a year; and provision was made out of the surplus thus obtained for augmenting small livings and building glebes and churches, and defraying the expenses that had before been thrown on the vestry cess. The Establishment was thus made much more defensible. If it continued to be an anomaly it ceased to be a scandal; its offices were no longer pampered sinecures, and its dignities at least bore a fair proportion to the number of its worshippers. The unceremonious way in which superfluous bishoprics were abolished by a secular Parliament gave great offence in some quarters in England, and was one of the proximate causes of the Tractarian movement.

A large portion of the Government were desirous of coupling with this measure a provision for appropriating to secular purposes the surplus revenues of the Church resulting from the grant of perpetual leases of Church lands, but this clause, which was very restricted in its operation, was abandoned in Committee as likely to endanger the success of the Bill. The principle, however, of the right of the State to appropriate these surplus revenues to other than ecclesiastical purposes was soon revived, and it became for some years the great battlefield of politics, and ultimately led to the downfall of the Whig ministry.

Before, however, we enter on this question, a few words may be devoted to the personal relations of O'Connell with the ministry. He kept up a very confidential and constant correspondence with his friend, Fitzpatrick, in which we may trace clearly the vicissi-

tudes of his feeling. In the early months of 1833 his letters breathe the most intense antipathy to the government of Lord Grey—an extreme desire and an ardent hope that it might break down through the combined opposition of Radicals, Repealers and Tories; through its own divisions; through the hostility of the House of Lords, and perhaps of the King. On June 4 he wrote, 'The ministry must resign. . . . . It cannot hold longer together, and their efforts to conquer the King must fail. . . . . Every change is for the better for us. . . . . It is a comfort to have this scoundrel Administration in trouble.'

The very next day, however, his tone is totally changed. 'This,' he wrote, 'is the crisis. The Lords must become ciphers. I am taking a strong part with the Government, and have had the honour of some of their confidential communications.' Then follows a very illuminating sentence: 'A little bird whispers to me "no prosecution."'

Two days later he wrote to another friend: 'I joined the Whig ministry last night and contributed perhaps a good deal to the extent and satisfactory nature of their victory. . . . . You do not know the Whigs. To be respected by them they must feel one to be a formidable enemy. They have always courted their enemies. I look to success with them only from attacking them with virulence until they believe me formidable.' The disappearance of Stanley from the Irish Government was exceedingly acceptable to O'Connell, and he was for a short time on intimate terms with Littleton who succeeded, and he was glad of the arrival of Lord Wellesley, though he spoke of him personally as 'a mere driveller.' 'If we were once fairly rid of Blackburne, I should expect all to be better.' 'The Tories are gone for ever, extinguished beyond and without

hope.' He speaks in August of 'the lures' that were thrown out to him to accept office, and in September he writes: 'You now can see that the Attorney-Generalship and the Chancellorship in prospective are at my command.'[1] The Whig Government had given him the silk gown and the precedence at the Bar to which he was most manifestly entitled.

It seems evident from these letters that in the summer of 1833, and immediately after the departure of Anglesey, negotiations had been going on for giving office to O'Connell. There was, however, little eagerness on either side. One section of the ministers appears to have agreed with Bishop Doyle that O'Connell would only be safe in office, but both Lord Grey and Lord Landsdowne were extremely reluctant to enter into any terms with him, and O'Connell himself during all the earlier part of the year had been inveighing against the ministry in the most furious terms. He finally resolved not to accept office. A remarkable letter to Fitzpatrick, dated September 17, 1833, expresses his position very fully. 'The reports,' he says, 'of my taking office are now only so much less idle than formerly by this circumstance, that the ministry have made and are making more direct offers to me. They are also putting out of the way all those with whom I would not and could not act. But all this does not make me one whit the less immovable. If I went into office I should be their servant—that is their slave. By staying out of office I am to a considerable extent their master. . . . . Without taking office I will be able to get: 1, a number of bad magistrates removed; 2, the yeomanry disarmed; 3, the tithes abolished; 4, the Establishment of the Protestant Church reduced in

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 355–385.

every parish the overwhelming majority of whom are Catholics or Dissenters; 5, to have offices filled with Liberals to the exclusion of Orangists. These are great things, and instead of soliciting some of them, as I should do were I in office, I will command them when out of office. Add to these the redress of corporate abuses and you will see that prospects advance for the Irish people, and I must keep out of office to be disengaged to forward the movement. . . . . Then lastly, but first in order of magnitude, there is the repeal of the Union. . . . . Believe me that if God is pleased to spare my life but a few, very, very few years longer (perhaps months would do, and I believe months will do), I will certainly have multitudes of Protestants of my party for the repeal.'

Then comes a curiously significant passage which I believe indicates a thought that often haunted him. 'But may not the repeal be dispensed with if we get beneficent measures without it? This is a serious question and one upon which good men may well differ; but it is my duty to make up my mind upon it and I have made up my mind accordingly—that there can be no safety for, no permanent prosperity in, Ireland without a repeal of the Union. This is my firm and unalterable conviction. . . . . We must have the Irish rents spent in Ireland. . . . . Let those who will not live in Ireland sell their Irish estates. . . . . Irish affairs must be managed by Irishmen.'[1]

O'Connell, however, while constantly pressing on the repeal question in Ireland, both in his speeches and in published letters, and making it a test at every election which he could control, was very unwilling to encounter the certain defeat which he would meet with if

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 387–389.

he brought it before the House of Commons. But the pressure of the party behind him, combined with the taunts of his opponents, proved irresistible, and in April 1834 he most reluctantly moved for the appointment of a Select Committee 'to inquire into and report on the measures by which the dissolution of the Parliament of Ireland was effected; on the effects of that measure upon Ireland, and upon the labourers in husbandry and the operatives in manufactures, and upon the probable consequences of continuing the legislative Union between both countries.' His speech, which lasted five hours, like all his greater efforts is well worthy of study, but he acknowledged the extreme nervousness with which he entered on the debate, and the speech was certainly not among the most effective he delivered. Much of it consisted of historical dissertations only slightly connected with the subject, and much of it required the manipulation of great masses of figures, a task in which he was never peculiarly successful. He was answered with extraordinary fulness of detail by Spring Rice, who undertook to prove by a long array of statistics that Ireland had grown more prosperous since the Union, and by Sir Robert Peel, who at least proved, in an argument of unanswerable force, the impossibility of two democratic Parliaments with equal powers and with the same executive working side by side in the British Isles. Only a single English member voted with O'Connell, who was defeated by 523 to 38.

In the meantime the Whig Government, which on the morrow of the Reform Bill seemed certain of a long period of overwhelming supremacy, was steadily declining. Several things acted against it. There was the Conservative reaction, which seldom fails in England to follow a great step in the direction of democratic

change, and which was intensified by the subversive doctrines continually put forward by the English Radicals. There was the consummate skill, tact, and moderation of Sir Robert Peel, who, while protecting the Government against Radical attacks, led the English people more and more to the belief that, in spite of his opposition to the popular Reform Bill, he was their most capable living statesman, and a man to whom the administration of affairs and the protection of popular interests might be most safely entrusted. There was the great division in the majority, for the fissure between Whigs and Radicals was steadily widening, and in the Cabinet itself there were grave differences about the manner in which the difficulties in Ireland should be encountered. The question whether the revenues of the Established Church should be not merely rearranged but diminished had, as we have seen, nearly wrecked the Church Temporalities Bill of Grey, and the same question revived in May 1834. A private member named Ward introduced a resolution pledging the House to appropriate the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to secular purposes. He was supported by the English Radicals as well as by O'Connell. The measure was met by the previous question, which was carried by 396 to 120, but it elicited sharply conflicting views from Lord John Russell and Stanley, and the result was that Stanley, the most brilliant debater, and Sir J. Graham, one of the ablest administrators of the Whigs, with a few others, seceded from the Government.

O'Connell ridiculed the small number of secessionists, quoting in one of his speeches, with great effect, the lines of Canning:

> Adown thy dale romantic Ashborne glides,
> The Derby Dilly with just six insides.

In his letters to Fitzpatrick, he said that Stanley was irrevocably ruined in public opinion, and that Graham was only 'a political goose;' but, in truth, the ability and influence then withdrawn from the Whigs were never adequately replaced, and the seceders had a powerful body of public opinion behind them. With the exception of a small group of Radicals, few persons in England were prepared to support such a measure as the disendowment of the Irish Church. A growing school at Oxford and in the country looked upon parliamentary interference with Church revenues as sacrilege, and the famous work of Gladstone on 'Church and State,' which appeared in 1838, embodied and widely diffused what may be called the transcendental arguments in favour of establishments. Sir R. Peel admitted that the State had a right to change and regulate the distribution of Church revenues, but he denied that it had any right to divert them from Church purposes; and, in the case of the Irish Church, he maintained on the ground of the Act of Union that disendowment would be a distinct breach of faith. That Act, he said, 'differs in this respect from an ordinary law, that it was a national compact, involving the conditions on which the Protestant Parliament of Ireland resigned its independent existence. In that compact express provision is made which, if anything can have, has an obligation more binding than that of ordinary law. . . . . A right was reserved in that Act with respect to the removal of the civil disabilities of the Catholics, but no right was reserved to the United Parliament to deal with the property of the Church of Ireland.' Peel, indeed, on this point somewhat understated his case. The Irish Parliament had given the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland a place in the Union compact quite apart from and supe-

rior to any other portion of the Act. By the fifth article it made it, and it alone, 'an essential and fundamental part of the Union.'

The Tory party, therefore, whether they adopted the extreme views of the new Oxford school or the more moderate views of Sir Robert Peel, were united in resisting any diminution of the revenues of the Church; and they could enlist in their cause the two cries of 'No Popery!' and 'The Church in danger!' which were probably the most powerful in England. The Whigs, as we have seen, were not equally united. A small but very able section agreed with Sir Robert Peel that the right of Parliament extended only to the redistribution, but not to the alienation of these ecclesiastical revenues. The main body, including Lord Grey, Lord Althorp, and Lord John Russell, maintained that Parliament had a right, when the wants of the Irish Protestants were adequately supplied, to apply the surplus revenues of the Church to purposes of education or of charity that would be beneficial to the whole community.

A few weeks after the secession of Stanley came the division in the Cabinet to which I have already referred, on the question of renewing the political clauses of the Coercion Act. It was at this time of the first importance to the Government to establish a cordial understanding with the Irish members in order to carry their tithe legislation, and the indignation of O'Connell at these clauses formed the chief obstacle. Littleton the Chief Secretary, and Wellesley the Lord Lieutenant, as well as Althorp the leader of the House, were in favour of dropping them, and Blackburne, the Irish Attorney-General, fully acquiesced. Without the knowledge of Grey, but with the assent of Althorp, Littleton communicated the state of things confidentially to O'Con-

nell, expressing his entire conviction that when the measure was renewed it would be confined to agrarian disturbances, and adding that he did not think it possible for him to vote for it in any other form. O'Connell expressed some doubt about the other members of the Cabinet, and especially about Grey, but he at length accepted the assurances of Littleton; he promised to treat the communication as confidential, and in consequence of it he refrained from opposing a Government candidate who was standing for Wexford. In the Cabinet, however, Grey insisted on the retention of the political clauses and he carried with him the majority; and ten days after his first communication Littleton was obliged to inform O'Connell that the Cabinet had decided to renew them, and that he himself would vote for them.

O'Connell was naturally extremely angry. He said that Littleton was bound at once to resign, but Littleton did not do so, and though a little later he tendered his resignation, he allowed himself to be persuaded by his colleagues to withdraw it. O'Connell declared that he had been tricked and deceived. He considered himself absolved from his promise of secrecy; and he brought the matter before the House of Commons.[1] There had, in truth, been great indiscretion and mismanagement, though not, I think, any real bad faith; but it does not seem to me that O'Connell under the circumstances of the case can be greatly blamed for having disclosed the communication which had been made to him by Littleton. His conduct at least fell far short of 'the black perfidy' of which Littleton accused him, and, although he afterwards acknowledged fully

[1] See the debate in Hansard, July 3, 1834, and Littleton's own account, *Memoirs of Lord Hatherton*, especially pp. 11–14, 52–58.

the good faith of Littleton, he had real and great cause of complaint. The Government was for a time in imminent danger of breaking down. The dispute ended in the resignation of Lord Grey, who was replaced by Lord Melbourne. A new Bill was introduced and carried instead of the Coercion Act, omitting both the court-martial clause and the political clauses of the former measure, and Wellesley and Littleton remained in the Irish Government.

O'Connell considered this on the whole a triumph. He had substantially gained his point about the Coercion Act. He had the credit—such as it was—of turning out the ministry of Lord Grey—the first ministry of the reformed Parliament. The resignations of Stanley and Grey had removed from the ministry his most formidable and inflexible opponents, and Lord Duncannon, who was his closest friend in the ministry, exchanged the Woods and Forests for the more important place of Home Secretary. 'We are on the way,' he wrote to Fitzpatrick, 'from a half Whig, half Tory government to one half Radical, half Whig, without the slightest admixture of Toryism.' He had great hopes that he would be able to pledge the new ministry 'to a lay appropriation of any funds to be raised in lieu of tithes.' This, he said, would be a declaration 'that there shall be no more parsons paid when there are not Protestants to constitute a flock, and this will be the first great step to liberate Ireland from supporting a Church *not* of the people.'[1]

The influence of O'Connell over the Melbourne Government was certainly much greater than over its predecessor, though largely for this very reason the hold of the Whig party on the English people was

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 445–455.

weakened by the change, and the star of Sir Robert Peel mounted higher above the horizon. The Government, however, as yet was by no means subservient to O'Connell. It was contrary to his wishes that Wellesley and Littleton retained their posts, and to his intense indignation Blackburne still continued Attorney-General. In letter after letter to Lord Duncannon he poured out the bitterest complaints of the ingratitude of the Whigs for the support he had given them, and of their systematic appointment of men who were either incompetent, or anti-Catholic in their views.

The change which brought Lord Melbourne to the head of affairs took place in July 1834. In the ensuing November the whole aspect of politics suddenly changed. The death of Lord Spencer calling Lord Althorp to the House of Lords deprived the House of Commons of a most popular leader, and William IV. then took a step which no sovereign of the House of Hanover except his father would have ventured to take. Without waiting for any hostile vote in the House of Commons he, of his own authority, dismissed the ministry and summoned Wellington and Peel to fill their place. The pretext of the dismissal was that Lord John Russell was not capable of filling the place of Lord Althorp, but the reason behind this was that the Government were being more and more committed to the policy of diverting to secular purposes part of the revenues of the Irish Established Church. To this policy William IV. was absolutely opposed. Like his two predecessors, he regarded the oath which he had taken at his Coronation to maintain that establishment as a binding pledge that he would use all his powers to prevent its injury.

It was a bold and at least premature step, taken during the absence of Peel on the Continent and with-

out any consultation with him, but the King rightly judged that the popularity of that statesman was rising in the country, and that the dismissal of the Whig ministry would arouse no serious indignation. He was mistaken, however, if he imagined that the Conservative reaction had reached such a point as to render possible an election like that of 1784, which had decisively vindicated the unconstitutional action of George III., shattered the forces of the coalition, and given Pitt a long period of undisputed ascendency.

Peel accepted office, but he judged the situation without illusion, and clearly saw that his time had not yet come. There was a great majority against him in the Commons. Stanley and the other Whig seceders refused to join him, and would only promise a benevolent and conditional neutrality. The English press, however, was on the whole favourable; the King and the House of Lords were ardent supporters of the new government, and the 'Tamworth manifesto,' in which Peel announced his full acceptance of the Reform Act as a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question, and at the same time sketched a bold and comprehensive scheme of administrative reform had an excellent effect. Parliament was dissolved, and in the new Parliament which met in February 1835, it was found that Peel, though still in a minority, had gained nearly 100 seats. The Whig party had lost much, but the following of O'Connell was increased, and with more than sixty followers he could hold the balance of power. In combination with the English Radicals he steadily supported the Whig party in constant opposition to the Government in the new Parliament.

Defeat after defeat showed that the ministers had no control over the House of Commons, and could ex-

pect no respite or forbearance from their opponents, and their final defeat, which took place in April 1835, was on an Irish question, and on one which took for the present the first place in the policy of O'Connell. He had for the moment practically put aside the question of repeal to concentrate all his efforts on the reduction or abolition of tithes. Both parties in the State agreed that some new settlement had become imperative. During three or even four years in many parts of Ireland all the efforts of the Government had failed to collect them, and though the immediate wants of the clergy had been met by a Treasury grant of a million, it was evident that this million could never be repaid. Both English parties also now agreed that tithes could only be maintained by converting them into a land tax payable by the landlords, granting them a premium for what was called their collection, but what was much more truly an acceptance of the transfer of the burden.

Shortly before the fall of the first Melbourne Ministry a scheme was put forward by the Government for meeting the difficulty by revaluing the tithe compositions under Stanley's Act, reducing the sum thus arrived at by twenty per cent., and converting that reduced sum into a land tax payable by the landlord and redeemable at fourteen years' purchase. It was opposed by O'Connell, who declared it was making tithe proctors of the landlords, and he himself brought forward another scheme which he advocated in a very able speech, the moderation of which was warmly recognised by Stanley.[1] He proposed that one-fifth of the tithes should be simply abolished—that one-fifth should be exchanged for a payment out of the Consolidated

[1] See Fagan, ii. 300.

Fund—that one-fifth should be a charge redeemable on inheritance, and that the remaining two-fifths should be paid by the occupiers of land.[1] To this plan he added that the surplus after satisfying the just demands of the Establishment should be appropriated as Parliament should determine. In July 1834, O'Connell succeeded in carrying in opposition to the Government an amendment striking off two-fifths of the tithes, and the Tithes Bill, thus largely modified, passed through the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords shortly before the downfall of the ministry.[2]

Peel resolved to take up the question on substantially the same lines, but without any diversion of the funds of the Church other than the necessary premium to induce the landlords to accept the burden. His plan was that tithes should be changed into a land tax payable by the landlord, with a diminution of the nominal value by twenty-five per cent. The Whig Opposition chose this as their ground of battle, and Russell moved as an amendment the famous Appropriation Clause, affirming that any surplus revenues of the Irish Church not required for the religious wants of the Protestants should be applied to the education of the people at large, and that no measure concerning tithes would be satisfactory which did not embody this principle. The Government were defeated by majorities of 33 and 27. Peel retired from office, and Melbourne became once more Prime Minister.

If it be considered as a mere party move, there has seldom been a more disastrous mistake than that of the Whigs in bringing forward this Appropriation Clause, and in selecting it as the question on which to over-

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[1] Hansard, May 6, 1834, p. 652.
[2] Hansard, July 30, August 11, 1834. Walpole's *Hist.* iii. 265–266.

throw the first feeble ministry of Sir R. Peel. At the same time, there never was a more loyal or moderate attempt to remedy a great injustice. Few persons will now deny that the Church revenues might have been justly diminished, or that an application of a portion of them to the benefit of the whole community would have strengthened the position of the Church. The ministry of Lord Melbourne, however, soon found the task they had undertaken beyond their powers. Lord J. Russell, as minister, duly brought in the Clause as a portion of the Bill for commuting tithes, but although it was carried through the House of Commons it was only by a small majority, and a majority of the English members were against the Government. The violence of O'Connell, who supported the Appropriation Clause with passionate zeal, produced a strong Conservative reaction in England. The King was known to be opposed to the policy of his ministers, and the House of Lords by large majorities rejected the clause. In the meantime the tithes question continued in abeyance, and it was plain that until it was settled there could be no real peace in Ireland. There were not wanting those who urged the ministers, as the sole means of carrying their Bill, to avail themselves of the fierce Radical spirit which was abroad, and which demanded the subversion of the House of Lords or its organic change. Happily, however, those who then guided the policy of England were deeply and fervently attached to the Constitution. Had they persevered, a violent revolutionary spirit might have arisen; and, by abandoning the Appropriation Clause in 1838, they probably saved the country from an irretrievable disaster at the cost of a ruinous party humiliation.

The five years of the second Melbourne ministry exhibited O'Connell in a new light. Without any dis-

tinct or formal treaty he was now in close alliance with the ministry, and he exerted all his influence to support it. His power was very great, for the united majority of Melbourne was little more than ten, and of this party about seventy were repealers. The government of Ireland was now placed in hands which were very acceptable to O'Connell. Lord Mulgrave (afterwards Marquess of Normanby) became Lord Lieutenant, and Lord Morpeth Chief Secretary, and the Under Secretary was Drummond, who had already won a considerable scientific reputation, and who now proved himself a powerful and liberal administrator. They were prepared to make large and generous concessions both of patronage and law for the purposes of establishing religious equality, as far as this was compatible with the maintenance of the Protestant Establishment and of the Legislative Union. O'Connell was on friendly and confidential terms with them all, and to the great indignation of the Orange party was invited to dinner at the Castle. The law appointments, to which he always attached a special importance, were in accordance with his wishes and probably largely due to his suggestion. His old enemy Blackburne was no longer Attorney-General, and was replaced by a Protestant lawyer named Perrin, who had long been recommended by O'Connell for promotion, while the Solicitor-General was O'Loughlin, a Catholic lawyer of high character and considerable attainments, who was a warm friend of O'Connell.

It is tolerably certain that O'Connell was largely consulted, at least about the Irish appointments, and he avowed that one of his first objects was a complete exclusion from office of all who were connected with what he termed 'the Corporation and Orange factions.' 'I will not support the ministry if they leave in place

or power one of them. They must all go. Not one of them can be tolerated as an instrument of government. As to Blackburne, Martley and that gang, out they go! Do not credit the possibility of any one of them remaining in office.' His forecast of the prospect of the Government shows that curious want of prescience, largely due to an extremely sanguine disposition which he often displayed. 'Not only is there no appearance of a Tory reaction, but it is believed that Peel has actually declared that *he* gives up that party for ever. There is some truth in the report. The party are down I do believe for ever; but they must be excluded rigidly in Ireland, or nothing is done.'[1]

With O'Connell's commanding power among the supporters of Government, he might, if he pleased, have put forward a strong claim to office, and, although he was not eager in pushing his claims, he does not appear to have been altogether averse to it. 'You may be convinced,' he wrote to Fitzpatrick, 'that I will not accept office of any kind without distinct pledges. Nor is there any office I should accept save Attorney-General or Secretary for Ireland.' It appears that the ministry were at this time desirous of offering him the first of those posts, but the negotiations broke down, probably on account of the opposition of the King. It would, indeed, have been a bold step to confide the most important place in the legal administration of Ireland to a man who had been so recently the object of a State prosecution, whose proceedings had been denounced in

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[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 12. This was written April 14, 1835. It is curious to observe that only a week later Sir H. Hardinge reported to Peel the views of Sir J. Graham. 'His conversation was very Conservative, with a conviction that the difficulties of the Melbourne Government were so great that it can hardly outlive the Session.' Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 313.

more than one Kings' speech, whose whole career had been that of constant and skilful evasion of the law, and who had used the language which O'Connell had quite recently used about the men and the party who were now in power. O'Connell bore very good-humouredly his exclusion. 'I understand,' he wrote, 'the King made a personal objection to my being in power. Heaven help the worthy old gentleman! As if the way to give me power was not to keep me out of office.' He was, however, offered, but at once refused, the post of Master of the Rolls.[1]

Lord Melbourne very formally denied that the support of O'Connell had been purchased by any terms[2] whatever. This was no doubt literally true, but O'Connell knew well the dispositions of those to whom the principal posts in Ireland were entrusted, and he was fully aware that the ministers were determined to deal with at least two of the questions which he deemed most important—the tithe system and the reform of the Irish muncipalities. It has been generally admitted that he showed at this time, and indeed through the whole of this ministry, a great disinterestedness in personal matters—waiving all claims to office for himself, putting forward no claims for his family, and showing himself on nearly all occasions eminently conciliatory. I have myself heard Lord Russell bear testimony to this, and remarking on the great contrast O'Connell in this respect bore to Brougham.

I have already quoted the judgment Greville formed of O'Connell when he first appeared in London after his great triumph in 1829. A year later, when he had some experience of his parliamentary attitude, he

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 9–11. See too Torrens's *Life of Melbourne*, ii. 120–122.

[2] Fitzpatrick, ii. 5.

formed a much less favourable judgment of his character, though not of his abilities. He said O'Connell had 'a moral power and influence as great in its way and as strangely acquired as Bonaparte's political power was.' He believed him, however, to be shameless, untruthful, infinitely dexterous, versatile, even prudent, and he added that he was becoming popular with the lower Protestants. He was leading a mob, but the better sort of mob—formidable and well organised. No one of respectability joined him.[1] In 1838, after some years' experience of the alliance with Melbourne, Greville was convinced that O'Connell's motives were really good, and that he was desirous of aiding compromise and pacifying Ireland. He speaks warmly of his moderate and disinterested conduct when he declined the Mastership of the Rolls, and says, 'Lord Tavistock, who told me this, says no one could behave better than he has done about it, and he gives him credit (as the whole party do) for sincerity and purity of motive.'[2] Greville thought that O'Connell would probably end his career as Chief Justice. O'Connell would himself have preferred political office, and the dream even crossed his mind that he would soon sit in the Cabinet, with the direction of Irish affairs officially committed to him.[3]

O'Connell, once he had resolved to support the Government, acted with his usual courage and decision, and with the complete disregard for all charges of inconsistency which he always showed when there was some considerable practical object to be gained. He who had so lately almost exhausted the language of invective in his abuse of the Whig Government and party, now issued a manifesto to the Irish people avowing himself 'the determined supporter of the administra-

[1] *Greville Memoirs*, ii. 102, 109.
[2] Ibid. iv. 106. See too Fagan, ii. 360. [3] Fitzpatrick, ii. 38.

tion.' 'To the King's ministers,' he said, 'I have tendered my unbought, unpurchasable, unconditional support. I have neither made terms nor stipulations with them. It suffices me that their political principles are all identified with the cause of good government and of justice to the loved land of my birth. The tranquillity, the prosperity, the liberty of Ireland also appears to me identified with the maintenance in power of the present ministry.'[1]

It is an extraordinary proof of his power over the Catholic democracy, and of their unbounded confidence in his judgment and his integrity, that he was able to carry with him the great body of his political supporters both within and without Parliament in this sudden change. There was no doubt some discontent. Suspicions were sometimes breathed, and O'Connell gave it as one of his reasons for declining office that they might have been strengthened if he did anything giving his conduct the appearance of a bargain; but he was completely successful in carrying with him a disciplined and united party in support of the Government. Still more wonderful was his success in inducing them to put aside that agitation for repeal which appeared the very mainspring of his popularity. He now announced that, provided the Imperial Parliament would do justice to Ireland, he was prepared to abandon repeal. He even said that his only reason for being a repealer was the injustice of the government of Ireland, and that he would rather see justice done to his countrymen by an Imperial Parliament than by a local legislature.[2] If the present Government would place Protestants and Catholics on terms of real equality, if they would redress the flagrant grievances of the coun-

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 6. [2] Cusack, *Speeches of O'Connell*, i. 308.

try and encourage agriculture and manufactures, he was prepared to give them an unqualified support. 'The true ground to take,' he said, 'is Ireland upon an equality with Great Britain, or no Union. In other words, a "real Union" or "no Union." Let this be our cry, and every honest man in England and in Scotland will join in the shout.'[1] In one of his speeches in Ireland he said that after Catholic Emancipation had been achieved, Parliament showed every disposition to put all Irish questions aside and pay little or no attention to them. 'I then,' he said, 'took up repeal and, like the Flappers we read of it "Gulliver's Travels," I rattled it about their ears. The result is that the attention of Government is almost entirely engrossed with the affairs of Ireland.'

He took the people on this question fully into his confidence, and in a series of popular meetings in different parts of Ireland, held in 1836, he declared his intention of testing the Union, and he called upon great audiences to say whether they authorised him to announce that if a United Parliament did justice to Ireland the repeal agitation should be abandoned. With any other public man such a course would have been dangerous in the extreme, but O'Connell could play on a popular Irish audience like a great musician on his instrument, eliciting what tone and what response he pleased, and on these occasions no murmur of dissent appears to have been heard. In one of these speeches he said that he honestly confessed his disbelief that the United Parliament would do what he desired, but he said, 'I want to make the experiment of going to them with the authority of the Irish people and saying that I am desired to state that they will give up the agita-

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 59.

tion of repeal upon one condition, and upon one condition only—that of having justice done to Ireland.' 'The people of Ireland are ready to become a portion of the Empire, provided they be made so in reality and not in name alone; they are ready to become a kind of West Britons if made so in benefits and in justice; but if not, we are Irishmen again.'[1] 'This is the most happy period to work out the experiment. Ireland is now ready to amalgamate with the entire Empire. We are prepared for full and perpetual conciliation. Let Cork county and Yorkshire be put on a footing—let Ireland and England be identified. But for this purpose equality—perfect equality of rights, laws and liberties—is essentially necessary. We desire no more, we will not take less: a real effectual Union or no Union —such is the alternative.'[2]

This language is sufficiently clear, and it was a hard saying to many of his followers. The class of mind which ultimately developed into the Young Ireland movement, and also some intimate friends of O'Connell, such as O'Neill Daunt, who never became Young Irelanders, resented bitterly the abandonment of repeal, and the confession that it was urged as a means and not as in itself an end. In a very characteristic letter to Fitzpatrick, to whom he usually confided his inmost feelings, O'Connell defended his course. Fitzpatrick appears to have written to him that, if he was determined to waive the repeal question, he had better abstain as much as possible from public meetings and exhibitions. O'Connell replied, 'I totally disagree with you. I have no apprehension of unruly repealers. I should desire to give them a public opportunity of discussing their views in contrast with mine. I am as

[1] Fagin, ii. 490–496.

[2] Fitzpatrick, ii. 105.

much a repealer as ever I was, but I see the absolute necessity of confuting those who say we prevented the Union from having a fair trial in the hands of a friendly ministry, and also of giving a decisive check to Orangeism. The scoundrel Orangemen—always enemies to Ireland—now place all their claims to English and Government support on their being the real opponents to the repeal, which they call, "the dismemberment of the Empire." I have two objects—to overthrow the Orange system, and to convince the most sceptical that nothing but a domestic Parliament will do Ireland justice. With these views of the present aspect of affairs the sooner I come before the Irish public the better. I know the magic of being right. I never saw that which was founded on common sense defeated at a public meeting. Common sense sanctions and directs my present course. . . . . I will, therefore, attend every public meeting and every public dinner I possibly can.'[1]

Three measures of capital importance relating to Ireland were carried by the Melbourne ministry, though not exactly in the form which O'Connell desired. The one to which he attached most importance was the opening of the municipalities. This measure was preceded by municipal reform in Scotland and England, about which it is only necessary to say that O'Connell gave the ministers powerful and efficacious assistance in carrying it. The extension of municipal self-government to Ireland, however, encountered much greater obstacles. The existing corporations of the great towns found, indeed, few defenders. They appear to have had all the vices that spring from a close monopoly. By a law they had been open to Catholics since 1793,

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 19–20.

but they were self-elected bodies and they remained in consequence exclusively Protestant, and they had at the same time the worst reputation for corrupt jobbery. Not a single Catholic had sat in the Corporation of Dublin, though it had been open to them for forty years, and it was a centre of ultra-Tory and ultra-Protestant politics.

The Government desired to extend to Ireland the municipal franchises that were granted to England, but in the eyes both of Wellington and Peel such a course seemed very dangerous. A phrase attributed to O'Connell that the reformed municipalities would prove 'normal schools of agitation' was often repeated. It was felt that a new political force or instrument would be called into being, and it was feared that it would fall wholly under his direction. Both Wellington and Peel believed that there was too much evidence of malversation and misgovernment to make the defence of the existing corporations possible; but they maintained that the wisest course would be to abolish without replacing them, vesting their former powers in the Crown. They desired that all persons concerned in the nomination of juries, in the administration of justice, in the management of the police should be appointed by the Crown rather than by local authorities.[1]

The House of Lords, which was now largely dominated by Lyndhurst, adopted this view, and in 1836 changed the Government Bill for reforming the Irish municipalities into a Bill for their complete abolition. The House of Commons by a majority of 64 rejected the amendment of the Lords, but the Upper House refused to yield and the Bill was lost for that year.

The House of Commons carried the Bill again, and

[1] See Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 322–324.

by increased majorities, in 1837, but the opposition to it was now considerably divided. Stanley and Graham refused to support the policy of Lyndhurst, and the establishment of a new inequality between Ireland and Great Britain was distasteful to many of the regular supporters of Peel. Several of the Irish Conservative members, it was noticed, abstained from voting, and Peel adopted that medium course which was nearly always most congenial to him. He opposed the Government Bill in division after division in the Commons, where he was certain to be beaten, but he would not allow Lyndhurst to throw it out on the second reading in the Lords. The Government clearly intimated that if the House of Lords again took this course they would throw up office, leaving a Tory ministry to face the situation. O'Connell, in powerful and menacing speeches, declared that he was perfectly willing to carry out his experiment of obtaining justice to Ireland without repeal, but that one or other of these two things the Irish people were determined to have, and that there could be no justice without a real identification of the interests of the two countries; a genuine assimilation or equality of institutions and privileges. Wellington succeeded, however, by dilatory tactics in postponing the Committee stage of the Bill till it was too late to carry it in 1837. The accession of Queen Victoria in 1838, and the dissolution that followed, furnished new grounds for postponement. It was again defeated in the Lords in 1839, and it was not till 1840 that this question was finally settled.

It was settled like most great controversies in English politics by a compromise. The idea of conferring municipal institutions on the smaller Irish towns was abandoned, but in the more important towns municipal government was established on the basis of a 10*l.* fran-

chise. O'Connell became the first Lord Mayor of the reformed Corporation of Dublin. His election was received with extraordinary enthusiasm, and occasioned among his followers much rather vulgar and paltry glorification, to which O'Connell appears to have readily lent himself, but he discharged the duties of his office with scrupulous impartiality, and with great industry and tact.

The opening of the municipalities, though so long delayed, was at least a great triumph for O'Connell. The tithe question was also settled, but on lines which were very displeasing to him. The Appropriation Clause, he once said, was worth all the rest of the Government measures together, and he supported it in the House of Commons with all his power. It now took the form of a resolution that any surplus revenue of the present Church Establishment in Ireland which was not required for the spiritual needs of its members should 'be applied to the moral and religious education of all classes of the people without distinction of religious persuasion,' and there was even a proviso that this surplus might be resumed if through the increasing number of Churchmen its present revenues became insufficient.[1] Hardly anyone looking back through the cold light of history will now doubt that the Whig Appropriation Clause was just, moderate, and politic. But on this subject the House of Lords proved inflexible. Three times it passed the Commons, and three times it was rejected by the Lords, leaving Ireland still convulsed by the anarchy of the tithe war.

At last, in 1838, the Government, despairing of overcoming the resistance of the House of Lords at a time when their own majority in the Commons de-

[1] Cusack, i. 518–519.

pended upon the Irish vote, and when the majority of the British members were against them, dropped the Appropriation Clause and carried the Tithes Commutation Act in the form in which it had been originally proposed by Peel. Twenty-five per cent. of the nominal amount of tithes was struck off, and the remainder turned into a land tax payable by the owners of the soil.

By this law the burden of tithes was removed from the Irish peasants, who were nearly all Catholics, and imposed on the landlords, who were nearly all Protestants. It was contended by some political economists that the change would give no real relief, as the burden that was transferred to the landlord would be met by a corresponding increase in rents. But this, like all similar conclusions of political economy, is true only in as far as land is dealt with simply and rigidly on commercial principles, and in Ireland, as a matter of fact, it has not generally been let by the owner at the extreme competitive price. Of this fact the almost universal practice of sub-letting at an increased rent, and the great place which the middlemen occupy in Irish agrarian history are decisive proofs.

The Irish landlords readily assumed the burden in consideration of the land tax being applied to the support of their own Church, and in addition to this moral reason there was an economical one which sufficiently prevented them from raising rents. Land in Ireland was subdivided into minute fractions, and it was not worth while disturbing rentals by adding a few pence to each cottier's farm. In numerous cases which have been brought before the Land Commission under the Acts of 1881 and 1887 it has been shown that rents have remained unaltered since dates prior to 1838, and there is, I believe, no evidence that the Tithe Commu-

tation Act was followed by any general increase of rents. The Protestant Church remained in Ireland an established and a privileged body, but it could no longer be truly said to be supported by the contributions of a Catholic majority. Except in the case of the small body of Catholic gentry, this grievance was substantially removed. When the Church was disestablished and disendowed no voice outside the landlord class was raised in favour of simply abolishing the land tax, although that tax was said to have been in reality paid by the tenants, and although there is little doubt that the majority of them, if they had been consulted in 1835, would have voted for the simple abolition of tithes.

The tithes composition measure had the disadvantage of being conceded, like most Irish measures, to violence, and it has not proved a final arrangement. Subject to these qualifications, however, it deserves the highest praise. Few laws have ever been so completely successful in eradicating a great source of crime and allaying dangerous agitation. The Protestant clergy, constituting a class of resident and well-conducted country gentry, where such a class was peculiarly needed, have, when they have abstained from active proselytising, been in general both useful and popular, and the signal devotion which they manifested amid the horrors of the famine obtained for them a large measure of well-earned gratitude. Since the abolition of the tithes, in the worst periods of Irish crime and in the worst localities, they have almost invariably been unmolested and unmenaced, and probably few great measures have excited less genuine enthusiasm in Ireland than the English measure for disendowing them.

O'Connell belonged to the small class of Irish Catholic landlords who had an especial reason to complain of

the new tax that was thrown upon them, and the total diversion of the tithe charge from the Establishment to secular purposes was one of the objects nearest to his heart. It is not, therefore, surprising that he was much mortified at finding the tithes turned into a permanent land charge for the benefit of the Established Church. He had hopes that it might be diverted to other purposes, but he clearly saw that the feeling on the subject had gone down, and that the Catholic peasantry now felt themselves relieved and untouched. He was also very anxious to keep the Government in power, and he was sincerely desirous of calming the anti-tithe agitation. He publicly announced that, having himself resisted the payment of tithes during five years, he had now paid them, and had done so because he wished to give an example to his co-religionists, and he not only acquiesced in the abandonment of the Appropriation Clause, but appears to have actually advised it some time before the English ministers were prepared for it.[1] He had taken the same course on the question of the Irish Corporations. As long as the ministers resisted the amendments of the Lords he supported them with all his force, but he appears to have privately recommended an earlier and more complete submission than they would consent to.[2] He was, in truth, in his later career eminently an opportunist—always anxious to secure some tangible benefit, rather than risk it in hopes of gaining something more, and the violence of his language sometimes masked a policy essentially moderate and even timid. Sharman Crawford bitterly reproached him with acquiescing in an imperfect settlement of the tithe question and urged an uncompromising resistance. O'Connell, however, used his influence

[1] *Greville Memoirs*, v. 134–135 [2] Ibid.

in the opposite direction, and the agitation which had been of late so formidable speedily disappeared.[1]

A third great measure relating to Ireland which was carried by the Melbourne Ministry was the Irish poor law, making the support of the destitute poor a charge on Irish land, and at the same time establishing a workhouse test. On this question the attitude of O'Connell is very remarkable. The whole body of the Catholic episcopacy appear to have been in its favour, and Bishop Doyle wrote with great force in support of the principles of the Bill. The gigantic evictions or 'clearances' that had lately been going on made the question one of vital importance. The greater part of Ireland was covered with a pauper tenantry: multitudes of them squatters on the soil; others small labourers to whom the farmers sub-let fractions of land in the form of con-acre—that is, with the obligation of working out their exorbitant rent in the form of labour valued at probably not more than 6*d*. a day. With the immense over-population of agricultural land that had grown up since the Union, and under the influence of the various causes I have already described, a great removal of population had become inevitable. But under the con-acre system the small cottier had no money. He lived only on the produce of the little plot of land from which he was ejected.

In England a great consolidation of farms had sometimes been effected, and it was necessarily followed by a displacement of population. In the Tudor days this had taken place on a large scale and produced terrible distress, and one of its results had been the poor law of Elizabeth. The great Sutherland evictions towards the close of the eighteenth century transformed the

[1] See Fagan, ii. 579.

character of a large portion of the Highlands of Scotland, but they took place almost entirely on the property of a single very wealthy nobleman, who devoted during several years an immense proportion of his income to settling his former tenantry in Canada, where they soon became far more prosperous than they could ever have been on the barren soil from which they had been expelled. The great fall of prices that followed the peace of 1815 had produced serious agrarian disturbances in England, but the agricultural population in England was proportionately far smaller than in Ireland, and the redundant portion was speedily absorbed in the flourishing and rapidly increasing manufacturing towns that studded the land. Ireland had no such resources; her population was far more purely agricultural than in England, and the necessity for some legal provision for the poor seemed much more imperative.

An influence of another kind also strengthened the feeling in favour of an Irish poor law. The great overflow of unemployed Irish pauperism into England had begun. Irish labourers and Irish ejected tenants streamed there in thousands, and there were bitter complaints that they were lowering both the wages and the habits of English labourers and throwing an additional burden on English ratepayers. Unless Ireland could be made to support her own poor the burden was certain to increase, and this was a considerable motive of the poor law legislation.[1]

O'Connell did not absolutely oppose the Irish poor law, nor was he altogether consistent about it. Its great popularity and the strong support it received from the Catholic clergy had much influence upon him,

[1] See Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 116–117.

and in one of his letters to Bishop Doyle he even said that the arguments of that prelate had convinced him of the necessity of a compulsory provision for the destitute poor.[1] On other occasions he acknowledged that he could not avoid the conclusion that some legal provision for the poor had become necessary, but he looked upon it with unconcealed alarm and dislike. Nor was this a mere transient feeling. He afterwards said that, though he had consented to support the poor law of Lord Melbourne's Government, he had done so in order to satisfy popular feeling in Ireland and against his own convictions, and that he regretted what he had done.[2] He had read and thought much on the subject of poor laws, and it was one on which he felt strongly. On this question he was on the side of the strictest economists. He contended on principle that no one has a right to be supported by the industry of another —that poor laws tend to lessen the capital of the country and to lower wages, and that with the immense mass of pauperism in Ireland they would be useless unless they amounted to absolute confiscation. He wrote with great horror about 'that most destructive of all experiments, employment for the able-bodied out of poor rates—just as if poor rates increased capital, when it only distributes it in a different and less economic and less sagacious mode. It is so easy to be benevolent and humane at the expense of others.'[3] 'Never,' he said, 'was cant more conspicuous than in the cry of some of our poor law-mongers,' and he predicted that the poor law would afford less relief than it would inflict injury,

[1] Fitzpatrick, *Correspondence of O'Connell*, i. 251. This was in 1831. He afterwards, however, had a somewhat sharp controversy with Bishop Doyle on the subject; see Fitzpatrick's *Life of Doyle*, i. 382; ii. 364–372.

[2] Fagan, ii. 125, 618.

[3] Fitzpatrick, ii. 52.

and that 'delusion would end in greater misery and more dissatisfaction'.[1]

Such was his attitude towards the poor law of 1838—an Act which was amended in 1843 and somewhat relaxed in 1847 to meet the horrors of the famine. In its earliest form it was carefully limited, as might have been expected from a ministry which had very recently effected drastic and salutary reforms in the English poor law. It divided Ireland into 130 unions, each provided with a workhouse erected by a loan from Imperial funds. No right of relief was acknowledged; the boards of guardians were simply given a discretionary power to relieve the destitute, but only in the workhouses. Lest they should abuse this discretion, a power to dissolve them was vested in the Poor Law Commissioners. The cost of the system which in England was thrown primarily on the occupiers was in Ireland divided, but in very unequal proportions. In the case of tenements not exceeding 4*l.* a year, which formed an enormous proportion of the existing tenements of Ireland, the whole rate was thrown on the landlord. In the case of tenements of a higher valuation, it was divided equally between the landlord and tenant.

The speech of O'Connell on the subject of the poor laws on April 28, 1837, is one of the most important he ever delivered, and no one can read it without being impressed with the force of reasoning and the wide range of knowledge he exhibited. It was in some respects bitterly anti-English. He drew a terrible picture—supported, however, by much evidence, and a few years later largely corroborated by the Devon Commission, of the amount and the intensity of poverty in Ireland, and he attributed it solely to the system of

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 127.

English government. It was due, he said, to the penal laws which for nearly a century condemned the Catholic population to abject ignorance by forbidding them education, and to abject poverty by prohibiting them from acquiring landed property or long or profitable leases, thus directly discouraging agricultural industry, in a country where the chief forms of manufacturing industry had been crushed by law. 'For a full century,' he said, 'we had laws requiring the people to be ignorant and punishing them for being industrious—laws that declared the acquisition of property criminal and subjected it to forfeiture, and the consequences of a system of that kind are still felt.'

To this and to the enormous absentee drain he attributed the poverty of Ireland. He denied the idleness which all impartial judges declared to be one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the Irish labourer. He passed in silence over the excessive improvidence of the early marriages, the minute subdivision of land, the constant habit of sub-letting; the organised agrarian crimes, directed mainly against the improving landlord and tenant; the perpetual insecurity which these crimes produced, and which effectually checked the influx of capital into Ireland. He spoke in glowing terms of the natural fertility of Ireland, her navigable rivers, her noble harbours, but he took no notice of the capital fact that the absence of coal placed an insurmountable bar in the way of Irish manufacturers. He denied that Irish poverty was due to exorbitant rents, saying that it was calculated that the English landlord receives fifty shillings for every twenty shillings the Irish landlord gets, but he did not notice that where the rent exacted by the owner of the soil from the farmer to whom he had let his land was not excessive, rents four or even five times as high as that which was received by the

landlord were often exacted, by sub-letting tenants, from the cultivator of the soil. He even denied the patent fact of the excessive competition for land being a leading cause of Irish poverty, arguing that not less than 567,441 heads of families who had not an inch of land were in a state of absolute destitution. The overwhelming excess of agricultural labourers in Ireland in a state of misery was the most characteristic feature of Irish distress, and was in the opinion of O'Connell equally attributable to the poverty of landlord and tenant. In England, he said, agricultural wages were from eight shillings to ten shillings a week, in Ireland from two shillings to two and six-pence. But though these labourers were not strictly tenants, they for the most part lived upon the soil, their labour being paid not by money wages, but by small and temporary grants of potato land. It was also, he maintained, false that the great increase of population was accountable for the distress. Between 1821 and 1831 the ratio of increase in England had been 16 per cent., in Ireland only 13 per cent.

In the opinion of O'Connell, any attempt to relieve this mass of poverty by a poor-law charge would be an experiment of the most dangerous kind. He examined with great knowledge the different charitable institutions that existed in Ireland, many of them receiving grants from the Imperial Parliament. In Dublin alone the House contributed not less than 44,450*l.* to charitable institutions, and he showed how small an effect these various charities had in dealing with the vast mass of Irish pauperism. He predicted that the calculations of the Government about the number of workhouses and the amount of relief required would fall far short of the reality. In his opinion the demands of the intended poor law would ultimately absorb a full third if

not a half of the rental of Ireland, which would involve the ruin of a great proportion of the land-owners, with the inevitable effect of still further reducing the wage fund and increasing the poverty of the country. In the opposite extreme of Irish life the effect would be not less disastrous. 'Every man rented at 5*l.* a year is to become a ratepayer. This will include every man who at present saves himself from begging. While you are taking away from the beggar the charity he at present receives, you are at the same time taking from the small farmers the means that hitherto prevented them from becoming beggars also. At present there is not capital enough to pay for labour in Ireland, and is not every shilling levied for poor rate a shilling taken from the means of paying the wages of labour?'

The moral effects of the poor law he feared would be, if possible, even more disastrous. He had no belief in the theory that it would tend to tranquillise Ireland; he pointed to the terrible anarchy that had very recently existed in England itself under the influence of the old poor law, 'when the rural districts were nightly illumined by the torch of the rustic incendiary;' and he foretold that the attempts to restrict poor-law relief, once it was instituted, and to enforce the workhouse test would become a new source of irritation and exasperation. He did not believe it would have the effect some philanthropists predicted of inducing landlords to take greater care of their tenants lest they should be thrown on the rates. There was no law of settlement in the Irish poor-law system, and without such a law it cannot affect the landlord in that way.

'It was the union and not the landlord who would have to pay for the support of the poor wherever they are found, and whatever the burden of the landlord it will only be shared by him in common with his neigh-

bours.' At the same time he said he did not ask for a law of settlement, for he believed that it would produce evils far greater than any it would cure. The idea which some seemed to entertain of making labour productive at the expense of a poor rate he believed to be absolute folly. 'To me it seems that no proposition has been so fully demonstrated by theory and practice as this: that you cannot make labour productive by means of any fund you may raise for the purpose where that labour has not been rendered productive by the enterprise of private and individual speculation.'

He dreaded the effect of the poor law in diminishing or destroying the kindly and charitable feelings for which the Irish poor were pre-eminently distinguished. Their readiness to help one another when in extreme distress, their strong filial and parental affection, their habitual consideration for all of kin to them had excited the admiration and often the astonishment of those who knew them well. Was this likely, O'Connell asked, to survive the poor-law system? In Ireland there is 'around the poorest and most destitute class a broad margin composed of men who are not actually paupers, but who are scarcely able by dint of the strongest and most incessant exertions to eke out a livelihood.' How natural would it be under such conditions 'for a son to say, "Why should I diminish my own means to support my infirm father when there is the union workhouse to receive him? Why should I exhaust myself with labour to maintain my mother when there is the same refuge for her? Why should I assist my blind cousin or lend a helping hand to my lame uncle? Is there not the union workhouse to receive them?" This is only a natural train of argument. You will deprive the Irish poor therefore of the charity they at present have; you will extinguish in their bosoms those

kindly feelings and generous emotions which are beyond all price, and you will reduce them to the same miserable and degraded condition out of which you are now seeking to raise a considerable proportion of your own agricultural poor.'

At the same time he frankly acknowledged that some measure of poor law for Ireland had become inevitable, and that the strong current of both ecclesiastical and lay opinion favoured it. For his own part he believed that evil should be grappled with in other ways, and that it would need on the part of the Imperial Parliament some considerable pecuniary sacrifice —something like the twenty millions that had recently been voted to compensate the slave-owners in the West Indies—something like the cost of a small war. Only by such means, and not by a purely Irish tax, could a real impression be made on that mass of Irish poverty for which British rule was so largely responsible.

Nor did O'Connell shrink from specifying the remedies he would himself prefer. The first and perhaps the most important was State-aided emigration. The removal to a fertile and unoccupied soil of a large proportion of Irish pauperism would, he clearly saw, be the greatest of benefits, and he urged that the Government should take possession of the vast tracts of waste and unused land that existed in Canada, and employ them for the encouragement of emigration. It would enrich the Canadian people by sending out to them great numbers of healthy, able-bodied labourers, who were much required. It would injure no one, and it would merely follow a precedent which had been successfully set by the Government of the United States.

The second remedy was a considerable expenditure on public works. Such expenditure, he admitted, should be undertaken with much caution. 'No per-

manent good would result from public works undertaken merely for the purpose of giving employment for the time.' He did not propose, as a celebrated statesman had once proposed in the House, to dig holes one day and fill them up the next. He proposed works of enduring utility, the construction of roads and means of communication through mountains and bogs, the drainage of land when the capital required goes beyond the means of individuals to supply.

The third remedy was one which would not directly cost England anything. It was to revert to the policy which had been already carried out by the Plantagenets and the Tudors, and which had been a favourite idea of the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century. It was the imposition of a heavy tax on owners of Irish estates who did not live half the year at least in Ireland. The worst feature in the domestic economy of Ireland, he said, is that the greater part of its rental is spent abroad. If the large absentee owners did not wish to live in Ireland they should sell their estates. A substantial absentee tax would bring more permanent relief to the Irish poor than the proposed poor law.

He concluded his speech in language which seems to me to breathe the accent of most genuine sincerity. 'I do not hesitate to declare that my own individual opinion is not favourable to a poor law, but least of all is it favourable to such a law as this which you propose to give to Ireland. I would implore you, before the step is decisively taken, to have it fully, maturely and deliberately considered in all its bearings—to give nothing to the unholy cry of those who hold themselves out as the especial patrons and friends of the poor, because they are favourable to these laws. I entreat you to yield to no clamour of that kind, but fully and maturely to consider the Bill in every stage. Then, be the result

what it may, I shall feel that I have done my duty. I have not, I own, moral courage enough to oppose a poor law altogether. I yield to the necessity of doing something; but I am not deceitful enough to prophesy that you will reap any lasting or solid advantage from the introduction of such a law into Ireland.'[1]

The apprehension with which O'Connell regarded the introduction of a poor law into Ireland was shared by many very competent judges. Archbishop Whately was one of several economists who pointed out with irresistible force the extreme dangers of any lax administration of poor relief in Ireland. He had been a leading member of the Poor Law Commission which had presented in 1836 a terrible picture of the destitution of Ireland, showing that nearly one-third of the population depended for their support on the wholly inadequate supply of potatoes around their cabins, eked out by migratory working and begging. In common, however, with his colleagues, he recommended a treatment of the disease essentially different from that of the poor law. They believed that it could be best met by a large expenditure of public money on agricultural schools; on draining and cultivating waste lands, on developing public works and in assisting emigration. Peel in his private letters expressed the most profound scepticism about the possibility of obtaining in Ireland such administration of relief as would prevent a poor law from becoming an intolerable scourge.[2]

The poor law of 1838 and 1843 had hardly come into full and general operation when it had to encounter a calamity before which all administrative resources broke down. The attempts to deal with the great

[1] Cusack, i. 490–515. See too O'Neill Daunt's *Recollections*, i. 274–276.

[2] Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 326 ; iii. 502.

famine do not fall within the scope of the present work. It will be sufficient to say that though the poor law failed to prevent the starvation of tens of thousands, and though its workhouse test aroused a perfect fury of popular hostility, it undoubtedly saved countless lives and mitigated an overwhelming calamity. It had other and far-reaching effects of tremendous power. The poor rate rose rapidly to a height which was absolutely crushing to a poor and heavily encumbered landlord class, who were for a considerable period deprived of their rental; and combined with the Encumbered Estates Act it produced a vast change in the ownership of land. It brought in a new class of landlords, who were in numerous cases ignorant and careless of the customs, history, and traditions of the estates which they purchased; who were specially invited by the Imperial Parliament to deal with land on purely business and commercial principles, and who, on the whole, proved far less indulgent to the tenants than the class they superseded. The poor law at the same time became the most powerful of all engines for sweeping away a pauper tenantry. The rule that relief should not be granted to any tenant who possessed more than a quarter of an acre of land obliged multitudes during the famine years to throw up their farms in order to obtain relief in the poor-houses. The careless, good-natured indulgence with which the old landlord had acquiesced in the multiplication of such a tenantry vanished when the burden of supporting them was thrown on his shoulders. The scruples that might be felt by a broken and almost ruined landlord about carrying out the wholesale eviction of non-paying tenants disappeared when the State undertook their support, and the improving landlord who came in as a purchaser under the Encumbered Estates Act, found the consolidation and

redistribution of farms the first condition of economic progress.

Into the good and evil of these great changes it is not here necessary for me to enter, but there are two remarks which may be made about the attitude of O'Connell towards the poor law. The one is the great wisdom of his suggestion that State-aided emigration would be of the highest value to Ireland. It was a recommendation which had been anticipated by three earlier Parliamentary Committees,[1] and which was afterwards fully supported by the Poor Law Commissioners, as it has been in our own day by Mr. Tuke. Emigration, indeed, after the famine was carried out by voluntary effort on an enormous scale, but who can say how vastly its suffering might have been diminished if it had been organised, directed, and assisted by an intelligent government, or with what different feelings the emigrants might have looked back on the country and the government which they left? It is probable, indeed, that the true source of the savage hatred of England that animates great bodies of Irishmen on either side of the Atlantic has very little real connection with the penal laws, or the rebellion, or the Union. It is far more due to the great clearances and the vast unaided emigrations that followed the famine.

The other remark is that the attitude of O'Connell about the poor laws, whether it was wise or unwise, at least clearly showed that he had opinions of his own, which he was capable of maintaining when they were extremely unpopular among the classes on whom he chiefly depended. On this question he ran counter to the whole body of ecclesiastical Catholic opinion in Ireland, and it was by no means the only one on which he

[1] See the *Report of the Devon Commission*, pp. 1141–1142.

showed that he was something more than a mere demagogue. He steadily refused to connect himself with the English Chartists, though he agreed with some of their leading views, and though they were the only class in England who were prepared to support to the full extent his Irish demands. He refused to give any countenance to the Canadian insurrection though it was a movement which might have been easily made very popular among Irish Catholics. He exerted all his influence to put down the faction fights which in some parts of Ireland were so mischievous and so popular, and he rendered a great service in 1837 and the beginning of 1838 by his strenuous opposition to the trade combinations which had broken out in Dublin and Cork, and which contributed largely to drive shipbuilding out of the former town.

These combinations were accompanied by the same savage tendency to outrage and murder that characterised Irish agrarian combinations; the same spirit of anarchy that is the most fatal of all obstacles to Irish progress. O'Connell described and denounced their crimes with unsparing severity. 'In Cork,' he said in a speech which he made in the February of 1838, 'within the last two or three years, thirty-seven persons have been burned with vitriol so as to lose their eyesight; and in Dublin there is not a day in which some such crime is not committed. On January 4, a man was dreadfully beaten only because, not belonging to the combination, he could not give the sign of recognition. On the 11th a man and his wife were violently beaten merely because the man was not a combinator. Some of those who have not murdered with their own hands have paid 3*s.* a week out of their wages for the hire of assassins.' Many of O'Connell's followers were engaged in these combinations, and when he persisted

in denouncing them they at once mutinied against him. For several successive days he was mobbed and hooted at the Royal Exchange, but he never lost his courage, not only denouncing in the face of a hostile meeting the crimes and the illegal combinations of the Dublin workmen, as certain in the long run to diminish their employment and lower their wages, but also boldly condemning all attempts to limit the number of apprentices; to enforce by terrorism a uniform rate of wages for all classes of workmen, and to compel employers to employ particular individuals selected or approved by the workmen and not by the employer himself.[1]

A few words may here be said about O'Connell's agrarian politics. It had been a prediction of the Duke of Wellington in 1828 that the Catholic agitation in Ireland might very possibly result in a general combination to refuse the payment either of tithes or of rent.[2] The first part of this prediction was verified, but it would be a total mistake to suppose that O'Connell ever gave or intended to give an agrarian character to the agitation he directed. He was himself a landlord, proud of his old pedigree and his old property, and with a good deal of the feudal feeling of his class, and in his political career he desired above all things to carry with him the support of the landed gentry of Ireland. He laboured from first to last to turn away the Irish people from illegal combinations and conspiracies, from agrarian crimes and from insurrectionary

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[1] Senior's *Journals in Ireland*, i. 40; O'Neill Daunt, *Personal Recollections*, i. 20–22; Fagan, ii. 661–667.

[2] Peel's *Correspondence*, ii. 71, 73. In 1838 Wellington again predicted that O'Connell would agitate for the non-payment of rents as he had already done for the non-payment of tithes, as a means of obtaining repeal. Ibid. p. 364.

movements, and he steadily discountenanced all attempts to connect his agitation with predatory incitements and attacks on property. The tithe war is a partial exception, but, as he always maintained, tithes in Ireland stood entirely apart from all other kinds of property, and even when attacking Church revenues he clearly recognised the equity of a full compensation of life interests. One of his arguments, indeed, against the commutation of tithes into a land tax payable by the landlord, who was supposed to recuperate himself out of the rent, was that to blend these two forms of property might lead the Irish peasant to look with less conviction on the obligation of rent.

The socialistic agrarian doctrines which have since become the main stock-in-trade of the Irish agitator were only fully elaborated after his death, but whenever any attempt was made to introduce them into the repeal movement, O'Connell steadily opposed it. He told O'Neill Daunt that he had once greatly admired Arthur O'Connor, the well-known leader of the United Irishmen, but had changed his opinion when he heard from Curran that he formed a project of making an agrarian revolution in Ireland.[1] The predatory notions that had grown up among the English Chartists appear to have been a chief reason why O'Connell refused to have any connection with them. One prominent agitator recommended a strike against rent until what he considered the grievances of Irish tenants were settled. O'Connell promptly responded by expelling him from the Repeal Association,[2] and he constantly urged that his advocacy of repeal was conditioned upon his belief that the establishment of a domestic Parliament would

[1] O'Neill Daunt, i. p. 50.
[2] Gavan Duffy's *League of the North and of the South*, p. 50.

in no degree impair the existing security of property. He always earnestly deprecated anything of the nature of class warfare in Ireland. At the same time he was utterly opposed to the systematic consolidation of farms and consequent evictions which were taking place. He repeatedly denounced the Sub-letting Act of 1826; and he dwelt with much force upon the excessive powers and facilities of eviction given to the landlord by several enactments after 1815. He mentioned before the Devon Commission the remarkable fact that in 1800, when the Irish landlord Parliament was extinguished, 'there was no power to eject tenants except through the medium of an expensive process of an ejectment in the superior courts,' which cost even in undefended cases about 18*l.*, and if the tenant took out a defence, from 50*l.* to 150*l.*, whereas by the legislation of the Imperial Parliament he could now be ejected for a few shillings by civil bill.[1]

On this subject he differed widely from Bishop Doyle as well as from most English economists. The old system of management under which every tenant was allowed when his children came of age to divide his farm and to settle them upon it was fast leading to ruin, and it is one of the greatest and justest reproaches that can be brought against the Irish landlords that they had allowed it to grow up. With early marriages and large families and rapidly increasing population the greater part of Ireland was now in the hands of a thriftless, ignorant and wretched tenantry, cultivating farms that were too small to yield through the whole year even the barest necessaries of life; living lives which were materially little superior to those of savages, and ruining the land by the manner in which they

[1] *Devon Commission, Digest of Evidence*, p. 835.

cultivated it. When the great fall of prices at the peace broke down the agricultural system, it became the main object of a large number of landlords to clear away the pauper tenantry; to divide their land into farms sufficiently large to be profitably cultivated; to abolish the middleman; to give a preference to tenants who had some capital and some real agricultural capacity. The Act of Sir J. Newport enabling landlords by a short process to eject tenants, the Sub-letting Act and the disfranchisement of the 40*s.* freeholders facilitated or accelerated the change. Bishop Doyle, in some remarkable evidence given before a commission in 1830, expressed his full approbation of the new system of management. It had become, in his opinion, absolutely necessary. It was an unmixed benefit not only to the owners but also to the tenants who remained, while the vast increase of the annual produce of the soil under a system of good cultivation was a great and undoubted benefit to the community as a whole. Every wise man, Bishop Doyle said, applauded the measures which had been taken for remedying the enormous evils of sub-letting and pauperism, and he regretted that the Sub-letting Act and the Ejectment Act had not been enacted thirty years earlier. If they had been he thought the condition of Ireland might have been very different from what it was. But Bishop Doyle added, and surely with good reason, that the condition of the ejected tenants was miserable in the extreme, and that the new system ought to have been accompanied by a legal provision for the poor, and also by State assistance to emigrants.[1]

Economists argued, indeed, that with superior hus-

[1] *Select Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland* (Minutes of Evidence), pp. 391–398. See too the *Digest of the Devon Commission*, pp. 1125–1131.

bandry the demand for agricultural labour and the rate of agricultural wages would rise, and that ejected tenants would earn more as hired labourers upon substantial farms than they could possibly have earned by the miserable cultivation of minute plots of land. But this could only be after a considerable interval, and in the mean time vast numbers underwent sufferings which it is difficult to exaggerate. No page in Irish history is more painful to look back on than the great clearances both before and after the famine. Considered as a whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were inevitable, but they were often carried out with great harshness, and they ought certainly in my opinion to have been accompanied not only by a legal provision for the destitute poor, but also by an extensive system of State-aided emigration.

The latter remedy O'Connell had advocated, but he was strongly opposed to the poor law; he denied the necessity of the clearances, and he was very reluctant to make any fundamental change in the old management of land. He said in the House of Commons that he had heard the middlemen of Ireland traduced, but 'he was quite prepared to stand up in their defence. They mitigated the evils of absenteeism; they gave employment to the labouring poor. In the year 1798 they formed the yeomanry cavalry of Ireland, and prevented the Revolution of France from spreading to that country.'[1]

It was only in the latter part of his career, and as a consequence of the great clearances and of the agrarian murders, which he attributed mainly to them, that he began seriously to urge the necessity of new agrarian legislation. It should chiefly, he thought, take the

[1] March 22, 1830. See Cusack, i. 40.

form of giving the Irish tenants increased security of tenure and compensation for improvements. In the evidence which he gave before the Devon Commission he dwelt specially upon the great increase in the practice of taking tenants at will rather than on lease. He attributed it to the fall and fluctuation of prices since the war; to the change in the currency altering the relative value of land and money; to the exorbitancy of the stamp duties on leases, and to the prevailing and, as he believed, much exaggerated belief that an enormously excessive population was subsisting on the land and must eventually be removed. Political causes had also some influence, but in his opinion economical ones were the most powerful, and he believed that the precariousness of tenure they had produced was one of the most serious evils in Ireland.

'I am in my judgment,' he said, 'very decidedly for a fixity of tenure. I think there are circumstances occurring which lead to it in the worst way. The number of agrarian murders is manifestly accumulating; I think there are more in each succeeding year. . . . If things go on as they do, those murders will accumulate and there will be in a great part of the country a fixity of tenure conquered from the landlords from fear, and certainly I think everybody will agree with me that a worse fixity of tenure could not by any human possibility or diabolical contrivance be invented.' The only real remedy, he believed, would be to make leases compulsory. Land tenure in Ireland should rest on distinct, definite, written contract. Thirty-one years' leases, he thought, would be the best, but no lease should be for less than twenty-one years. He thought that no rent should be recoverable except upon a lease. Such a measure, he admitted, would be a violent remedy, but it was required to meet a great present evil

and to avert a great danger in the future. The stamp duties for every transaction in land under 100*l.* a year should be remitted, and legal forms of leases simplified.[1]

In a private letter written soon after he recurred to the alarming increase of agrarian murders. He observed that in the past year there had been nineteen murders of this class between Tipperary and the King's County, and that in every case they had been preceded by a great clearance of land. 'Recollect also,' he says, 'the hideous picture given in Lord Devon's Report of the state of the greater part of the agricultural population. In comparing that state with the crimes on both sides connected with the clearance system, ask yourself whether it is possible that things can remain as they are. . . . Nothing will do but giving some kind of fixity of tenure to the occupiers, and especially an absolute right of recompense for all substantial improvements. I am ready to take as to fixity of tenure as moderate a measure as is consistent with the principle. . . . In truth, unless something be done the people will slip out of my hands and the hands of those who like me are for peaceful amelioration, and they will operate a fixity of tenure for themselves with a vengeance.'[2]

Looked at in the light of future events these views will hardly be considered extravagant. The system of tenancies at will was undoubtedly a great evil, and O'Connell was perfectly right in wishing to put an end to it. He desired the Ulster tenant-right to be legal-

[1] *Digest Devon Commission*, pp. 253–256.

[2] Fitzpatrick, ii. 352, 369. The fullest statement, however, of O'Connell's views on the land question will be found in his great speech, April 3, 1846 (Cusack, ii. 165–207). It contains a vast amount of information selected from official sources about the agricultural condition of Ireland, and is deserving of most attentive study.

ised and extended to other provinces, and also a repeal of the various Acts facilitating evictions which had been carried since the Union. 'Above all,' he said, 'give to the occupier some security of tenure by at least allowing the tenant the full benefit of all the capital and the labour expended by him in the improvement of the lands, and preventing his being dispossessed until he is recompensed in full for all valuable improvements.'

It is to be feared that this latter remedy would have given little or no help to the vast cottier peasantry whom the great clearances banished from the soil. Sunk in abject ignorance and poverty, cultivating in the worst and most wasteful manner, they were a class deserving of deep pity, but it would be difficult to find any ground on which they could be regarded as improving tenants. From an economical point of view the greatest of all improvements was their removal, and the first task of the improving landlord was to level their mud hovels, to fill up their ditches, to endeavour by a long course of manuring to restore to the soil which they had exhausted something of its old fertility. The broad fact that in 1836 Ireland contained a population of over two millions who could find no settled and steady means of support, and were for several months of the year on the verge of starvation, made a great displacement absolutely inevitable. There was, however, a large intermediate class who had fenced the land and erected its buildings, and done the various things for the farm which in England would have fallen to the share of the landlord, and their improvements constituted a real and important question. While the system of long leases generally prevailed it was not pressing. Under this system a tenant, with a full knowledge of what he had to do, took land on such terms that he could, during the currency of his lease,

amply compensate himself for his expenditure. There is no question that the long leaseholders had in general found their bargains eminently remunerative, and if there was any real moral question about improvements it lay much less between the landlord and his immediate tenant, than between that tenant and those to whom he had sub-let.

When, however, the leases diminished and the system of tenancies at will became common even in considerable farms, the situation was much altered. The tenure of the tenant became precarious, and the outlay of capital on improvements was at the mercy of the landlord. The ethics of the question were very simple. A long period of undisturbed possession at a rent sufficiently low to enable the tenant to recuperate himself for his outlay met the difficulty, and there was then no more injustice than in the English system under which the landlord let the farm fully equipped, adding to the rental the interest of the money he had expended on improvements. In a well-managed estate the Irish tenant expended his capital on the tacit understanding that as long as he paid his rent he would not be disturbed, but he fully accepted the equity of increases of rent at long intervals. As a matter of fact, these increases were rarer than in England, and one of the chief causes of the marked preference which the Irish tenant often showed for the position of tenant at will over that of leaseholder was due to the fact that where leases existed there was generally a revision of rent at the termination of the contract, whereas under the other system rents often remained for several generations undisturbed. At the same time, it was plainly within the power of the landlord, by rapid or excessive raising of rents, or by a resumption of land immediately after a tenant had laid out large sums on its improvement, to

confiscate those improvements, and the best judges felt that some special legal protection was needed.

The Devon Commission examined this question carefully. It arrived at the conclusion that confiscations of this kind had not been common, but there had been instances, and they produced a widespread uncertainty and insecurity among neighbouring tenants. They were at this time usually due to a spendthrift heir, a bankruptcy, or an unexpected change of ownership; and, although at the period of the Devon Commission not many cases had been brought forward, this would hardly have been true of the period which immediately followed O'Connell's death. A new influence had come into play. The Encumbered Estates Act took no cognisance whatever of tenants' improvements, sold to the purchaser the most absolute ownership of the land and of all that was on it, and guaranteed it to him for ever under a parliamentary title. The new purchasers, as a rule, knew nothing and cared nothing about the antecedents of the estate. The Court furnished them with no information on the subject. If the rents were low or the leases were soon to fall in, this was specially put forward by the Court as an inducement to purchasers, and they were not only permitted, but virtually invited, by the State to deal with the land as absolutely their own, and on strictly commercial principles.

The essential justice of O'Connell's demand was largely recognised by the English Government, and more than one measure was brought in by a Conservative ministry for the purpose of regulating and settling the question. They were most unfortunately and foolishly opposed, and they failed to become law. O'Connell was at this time in his grave, but there can be little doubt that these measures substantially carried out his views. Though these views were often denounced at

the time as confiscatory, there is no reason to believe that he desired more than was strictly equitable, or that he had any sympathy with the later doctrine that the improvements made by a tenant are his absolute property, altogether irrespective of the contracts or circumstances under which he made them, and that they constitute him a part owner of the estate. One of the chief advocates of this doctrine has pointed out as a sign of the limitation of O'Connell that he clearly recognised efflux of time at a moderate rent as a real compensation for improvements. 'The principles of agrarian reform were so ill-understood that even O'Connell admitted the vicious practice of charging the tenant rent on his own improvements, and counting the enjoyment of them as a gradual compensation.'[1]

A considerable absentee tax was, as we have seen, another leading idea of O'Connell. He contended that as much as six millions a year of the rental of Ireland habitually passed out of the country; that this drain was a leading cause of the excessive poverty of Ireland, and that it had been greatly increased by the Union. Few things irritated him more than the school of economists headed by McCulloch, who, while admitting the moral evil resulting from the absenteeism of the great proprietors, denied that it was an economical evil, maintaining that the rents were ultimately paid for by the productions of the estate. The alleged economical evil was considerably mitigated under the Melbourne Ministry by the Irish poor law and by the Act commuting tithes into a rent-charge, which provided that a substantial proportion of the rental of all Irish estates must be expended in Ireland and on Irish purposes.

The reform of the grand juries may also be consid-

[1] Duffy's *League of the North and South*, p. 62.

ered as in some sense an agrarian measure, for the grand juries consisted of the landowners of the country, irrespective of creed, and to them were entrusted the greater part of the local government of Ireland and also very considerable powers of taxation. There can be no question that in the eighteenth century and in the early days of the nineteenth century they were much tainted by the evils of monopoly, and that much jobbing went on under their influence. O'Connell would have placed them upon a broad elective basis. His view was not adopted, but the Grey Ministry in 1833, and the Melbourne Ministry in 1836, introduced some exceedingly successful measures of reform.[1] Something of a representative character was given to the grand juries by a provision that at least one freeholder or leaseholder from each barony must be upon the panel. Jobbing in public works was effectually dealt with by clauses providing that all such works must be made by contract, that all presentments for money must first be approved by special sessions in which the magistrates were associated with the leading cess-payers, and by giving large advisory and controlling powers to the county surveyor, who was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant. The control of the Central Government over the grand juries was in other ways still further increased. It took from them the appointment of their chief officers, subjected their accounts to a regular audit, substituted a general constabulary force for the old local police, changed the system of local rates, submitted local expenditure to the examination of the judge of assize, and gave the rate-payers a power of challenging it.

Under the influence of this legislation, which was afterwards in some respects amended, the old abuses of

[1] 3 & 4 William IV. c. 78; 6 & 7 William IV. c. 116.

the grand jury system almost wholly disappeared.[1] According to modern democratic ideas it continued to be an anomalous one, for it left local government mainly in the hands of the landowning class, and it gave great powers of taxation with very imperfect representation. But all competent and unprejudiced judges admitted that in the later decades of their history the Irish grand juries exercised their administrative powers with efficiency, economy, and integrity, and that the departments of Irish life which were under their control were conspicuously well managed. They consisted of educated men who had a large stake in the country and a thorough knowledge of its conditions, and who were for the most part perfectly honest and trustworthy. They provided employment for the landed gentry in their own neighbourhoods, and in a turbulent and disaffected country they were important centres of loyalty and order.

O'Connell himself was a large landlord and not a model one. The over-crowding, the sub-letting, the slatternly and impoverished state of Cahirciveen and the neighbouring district, the disgraceful condition of the Abbey Churchyard on his own demesne, where, as in so many other Irish churchyards, dead men's bones and fragments of old coffins lay scattered among the graves, struck strangers from England. In 1845, the 'Times' newspaper sent down a Commission to inquire into the management of O'Connell's estate, and it brought in an elaborate indictment of oppression and neglect against him, which was afterwards in its general outlines, though apparently without any careful examination, supported by Miss Martineau in her 'Letters from Ireland.' Attacks of this kind, which were

[1] See O'Connor Morris, *Present Irish Questions*, p. 313.

weapons in a bitter party warfare, must be looked on with much suspicion, but it is worthy of notice that Sir W. Gregory, who was a very competent judge and a warm admirer of O'Connell, said of him that 'his own property was a model of everything that ought not to be.'

There is, however, a good deal to be said on the other side. O'Connell inherited an estate in one of the most backward, uncivilised, impoverished parts of Ireland, and he had not the time, even if he had the inclination, to change its system and its customs. He appears to have been very popular among his own people, who used to throng to him in great numbers to settle their disputes, and competent and unprejudiced witnesses have declared that he was looked upon as a good and indulgent landlord.[1] Among others, W. E. Forster visited O'Connell's estate during the famine year, 1846, and after careful inquiry he expressed his conviction that the impression given by the 'Times' report was 'most unfair and untrue,' and that O'Connell was decidedly the best landlord in his district, though, owing to his having allowed ejected tenants from other properties to squat on his estate at nominal rents, there were some very wretched cabins on his land. On the whole, however, in the opinion of Forster, his villages were much better than many in Kerry.[2] A curious and very creditable letter has been preserved which was written by O'Connell to his agent in 1834, when the cholera was spreading through Ireland.[3] He directs his agent to spare no expense that can possibly alleviate the sufferings of his people; to provide at his cost additional medical attendance; to take care that while the epidemic was raging the poor around Darry-

[1] See Fitzpatrick, ii. 364–366.
[2] Reid's *Life of Forster*, i. 178–182. [3] Fitzpatrick, i. 412–413.

nane should have a meat diet; to distribute among them coal and blankets. 'Above and before all things,' he concludes, 'be prodigal out of my means—beef, bread, mutton, medicines, physician, everything you can think of. Write off to Father O'Connell to take every previous precaution—a mass every possible day, and getting the people to go to Confession and Communion, rosaries and other public prayers to avert the Divine wrath.'

A landlord who wrote in such a strain may have had many faults, but he can hardly have been harsh and oppressive. He was accused of having evicted tenants and he did not deny the charge, but he strenuously and very characteristically protested that he had never given any countenance to the clearance system. 'The clearance system consists in putting out tenants without substituting others in their places, thus clearing the land of the people. I never did any such thing. . . . Whenever I have been under the necessity of putting out one tenant, I immediately substituted another for him, giving to the outgoing tenant, in all recent instances, the fine paid me by the incoming tenant. I had thus introduced the principle and practice of tenant-right on my property.' He is said to have spent 4,000*l.* on Cahirciveen and to have considerably improved the condition of his tenants.[1]

It was in his old ancestral home of Darrynane that O'Connell might be seen perhaps at most advantage. It was situated on that Kerry coast which, in its wild and majestic beauty, is scarcely equalled in Ireland and hardly surpassed in Europe. Close to the house lay the open Atlantic with its gigantic waves, and its clear deep waters, and its ever-changing hues, while the coast

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 365–367.

line curved in graceful bays formed a long range of noble mountain heights. The delicious purity of the air, the mildness of the climate where the myrtle, the arbutus and the fuchsia can grow with true Southern luxuriance; the vivid, dappled, dream-like colouring on sea and land which gives a peculiar charm to Irish coast scenery, could be nowhere found in greater perfection. It is a colouring wholly unlike that of Southern Europe, but there are days when in its entrancing and most poetic beauty it could not be excelled on the Neapolitan or Sicilian shores.

The population was purely Celtic, Catholic, almost wholly Irish-speaking, and O'Connell lived among them like a feudal chief. His house was filled with guests, and no one knew better how to exercise hospitality. There was nothing there of the drunken revelry which so often characterised the rude hospitality of the Irish chiefs, and with which the pages of Barrington and Lever have made us familiar. The Chaplain and Confessor of O'Connell had an honoured place in his home. There was a family chapel to which all members of the household were daily called to prayer. The voices of little children were nearly always to be heard, for O'Connell loved to gather his numerous grandchildren about him. Even in his shortest holiday several hours of the day were usually spent in hard work in his library. He had never been addicted to the intemperate habits which were the prevailing vice of so many of his class, and to which his strong, impulsive, animal nature might have naturally inclined him, and when the great temperance movement of Father Mathew arose he supported it with all his influence, and himself took the pledge as an example to the people. But his high spirits, his countless anecdotes, his shrewdness, and his wit made his conversation an un-

failing delight, and his genial, unaffected kindliness of nature set all his guests at their ease. Forster, who visited him, described him as showing 'all the courtesy of a gentleman of the old school, which is indeed the tone of his bearing in his own home.' He was proud of his farming, and would boast like an old squire of the superiority of his hay crops over those of his neighbours. In the winter of 1845-46 he made 106 daily records of the temperature at Darrynane.

His favourite amusement was hare-hunting on foot, with beagles, over the mountains, and up to an advanced age he was not only the keenest, but also the most agile and untiring of the climbers. It was certainly no Epicurean sport. The hunt, usually accompanied by a large retinue of ragged followers, started at daybreak, and it was only after some hours and when the post bag had brought the correspondence of the day that the servants appeared bringing up breakfast for the hunt. It was spread on the green sward beneath the shelter of some great rock or on the border of a mountain torrent, and there 'the Liberator,' as he was always called, having first swiftly mastered the political news, often met his tenants who came to him with their grievances and their disputes, and among whom he administered a patriarchal justice. It was in these wild Kerry scenes, far removed from English types and customs and habits, that the poetic nature of O'Connell was developed and the lines of his character and sympathies were chiefly moulded. He had grown up among the traditions of the penal laws, of the 'Wild Geese' who fled to the continental armies from every Kerry creek, of the achievements of the Irish brigade in many foreign fields, of the desperate smuggling adventures in which his own family had been often mixed. The legends, the superstitions, the ideal types of an intense

Catholicism formed the very atmosphere he breathed, and they gave a strong anti-English bias to his feelings. But though priests and repealers were the most numerous among his guests, many Englishmen, Protestants and Conservatives, enjoyed his hospitality at Darrynane, and very few seem to have resisted his personal charm, or come away without their prejudices against him being materially diminished.

To the English press, which pursued him with persistent and most rancorous abuse, O'Connell was nothing more than a foul-mouthed, untruthful, vulgar and venal demagogue, and it must be owned that numerous passages might be culled from his mob oratory which gave only too much countenance to this view. But to those who knew him well there was another side to his character, and among his many warm friends there were men of undoubted honour. They lamented some things that he did and very many things that he said, but they fully recognised in him not only amazing abilities but also elements of character of a real, though unhappily by no means unmixed, nobility. 'He was,' said one who knew him well,[1] 'a true friend, faithful to all who had ever done him service.' He was in general eminently forgiving, and a love of giving pleasure was one of his most evident characteristics. It is a remark of a very able and very hostile critic of his career that this more than anything else seemed to be at the bottom of that extreme desire to command patronage with which he was often reproached.[2] He was capable even in his most angry controversies of traits of true magnanimity. There was an able and important Dublin man with whom he had been on intimate terms.

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[1] Mr. John Ball.
[2] Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History*, p. 176.

They afterwards quarrelled about some political difference; O'Connell denounced him in language of extreme violence, and for many years they were on terms of hostility. Long after when O'Connell was in his grave his opponent told a friend 'that during the period of their friendship O'Connell had become aware of circumstances of a private nature which if published would have been ruinous to the position and credit of his adversary, but in spite of the violence of their subsequent quarrel, was never led to divulge them or allude to them in any way.'[1] Lord Ebrington, afterwards Lord Fortescue, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was at one period in close and confidential relations with O'Connell, and afterwards when the repeal agitation began they were in violent hostility; but the Lord Lieutenant noticed that in his most angry moments O'Connell never suffered anything he had learnt in the period of their confidence to escape him.[2] How unlike the tone and ethics of the later school of Irish agitators!

The autobiography of Sir William Gregory gives a vivid picture of the kind of fascination he exercised, especially over young men. In 1842 there was an election at Dublin which was a great defeat for O'Connell. The Whig candidate was Lord Morpeth, in after years Lord Carlisle, who had been Chief Secretary in the popular administration of Lord Mulgrave, and was long afterwards one of the most popular of Irish viceroys. He was already a distinguished statesman, and he was a close ally and a personal friend of O'Connell. The Conservative and Orange parties set up Gregory in opposition to him. Gregory was then a young man of

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[1] See an interesting article on O'Connell by Mr. John Ball, *Macmillan's Magazine*, July 1873.

[2] I am indebted for this anecdote to the present Lord Fortescue.

twenty-five, almost wholly inexperienced and ignorant of politics, and he won the seat. O'Connell had warmly supported Lord Morpeth and spoke for him on the hustings. Gregory, however, defended his own cause in a bright, frank and outspoken speech, at the same time boldly repudiating all sympathy with the violent anti-Catholicism of many of his supporters. O'Connell was delighted with his young opponent. After the nomination he went up to him and said: 'May I shake you by the hand, young man? Your speech has gratified me so much that if you will only whisper the little word repeal—only whisper it, mind you—I will be the first to-morrow at the polling booth to vote for you.' They crossed over to England in the same boat, and O'Connell came up to him and said, 'Come here, young man! You are not ashamed to come and sit by old Dan, are you? You are just in the proper place where you ought to be;' and then in a conversation full of charm he dwelt on the wrongs of his co-religionists, and justified his efforts to redress them. Gregory remembered the pathos with which he described the scene —once too common in Ireland—when on a wet Sunday a ragged, half-starved crowd might be seen kneeling in the rain outside a squalid chapel far too small to contain the worshippers, while close by stood the stately, well-endowed Protestant church with perhaps half a dozen worshippers grouped around its deserted altar, and asked how long the state of things which such a contrast implied could continue.

Touches of this kind will not be wanting in any true picture of O'Connell. The big, burly form and the somewhat coarse features which the caricaturists made so familiar were redeemed from vulgarity by singularly keen and beautiful blue eyes: 'the most kindly and honest-looking,' it was said, 'that can be con-

ceived.'[1] He had a fine and delicately moulded hand, a bright smile which lit up his whole countenance, and his wonderful voice, which was so powerful that it was distinctly heard across Merrion Square, the second largest square in Dublin,[2] was at least as remarkable for its exquisite melody and its infinitely varied modulations. He had in his youth heard Pitt speak, and he was specially struck with the skill with which that great orator managed his noble voice. 'It was from him,' O'Connell once said, 'that I learned to throw out the lower tones at the close of my sentences.'[3] In his speeches at the monster meetings in Ireland nothing was so remarkable as the many moods he could produce. The same audience was alternately convulsed with laughter, moved to tears, roused to the most passionate excitement. He could touch every chord of the Irish nature, and as long as he could gain his point and influence his audience he cared very little what means he employed. No great orator had less pride in his oratory as a work of art. If the vulgarest jests, or the coarsest Billingsgate, or the most fulsome flattery, or the most scandalous exaggeration could answer his purpose he would resort to it, though few men could, if the occasion required it, argue a great question with a more convincing and commanding power, or quote poetry with a more exquisite pathos, or describe a scene with a more graphic eloquence. 'A great speech,' he used to say, 'is a fine thing; but, after all, the verdict is *the* thing,' and he seldom cared to reflect that the language which he used effectively before one audience

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[1] O'Neill Daunt, i. 255.

[2] I have heard this from a relation of my own—long since dead—who then lived in Dublin, and was pleased to find a complete corroboration of it in Fitzpatrick, ii. 312.

[3] O'Neill Daunt, i. 145.

was often taken down by the reporters and repeated to audiences of a very different kind.

He complained much of the reports of his speeches, and was more than once in violent conflict with the reporters. On one occasion, when he was speaking in a purely Celtic district, Government reporters had been sent to take down his words. O'Connell at once brought them forward to the very front of his platform, and then began his speech in Irish, telling his delighted audience why he was doing so, and eliciting peals of good-humoured laughter at the discomfited reporters. Fastidious and cultivated strangers, however, who sometimes dropped in at some of his speeches in remote Irish districts, were perfectly bewildered at the kind of language he used, and utterly incapable of understanding his reputation as an orator. Montalembert, who was one of his steadiest admirers, had visited Darrynane when a very young man, and heard some of O'Connell's Kerry speeches, and he came away profoundly disappointed. Constant repetition, O'Connell used to say, is necessary in politics, and if the same speech would do for several audiences he never hesitated to repeat it. 'He always,' as one of his friends said, 'wears out one speech before he gives us another.' His first and last object was to command or influence his audience, and with an Irish crowd he scarcely ever failed. Once a great and overcrowded platform on which he was speaking was reported to be giving way, and there was imminent danger of a terrible catastrophe. O'Connell at once told his audience what had occurred, and in calm but authoritative tones ordered them to descend one by one in single file without hurry or panic, and he was so perfectly obeyed that the danger was completely averted.

In England there were times when he attained a

considerable amount of mob popularity, but he was never really respected, and it was a keen humiliation to a large part of the English people that the Melbourne Ministry depended for its majority on his support. The many votes he could command; his admirable parliamentary eloquence; his boundless readiness in debate; his singular adroitness or, as his enemies called it, cunning in political management, could not counterbalance the unpopularity which attached to him and to his followers. He was, as he himself said, 'the best-abused man alive.' As the typical Irishman, Catholic, and Repealer, he aroused against himself the strong national and religious prejudices of large classes of Englishmen, while others were scandalised by his violent agitation for democratic reform and the abolition of the corn laws, and by the coarse, reckless, and vituperative language in which he too often indulged. The downfall of the Melbourne Ministry and the complete triumph of Sir R. Peel were due to many causes, but among them the general dislike of O'Connell in England and the undoubted fact that the ministry subsisted mainly by his support were prominent. The Appropriation Clause led to a great party humiliation, because it was plainly repugnant to the wishes of the majority of the English people, and the anti-Popery and anti-Irish feelings were chief elements of the strong popular sentiment against the Government.

It would have been impossible to give O'Connell a place in it without shattering it, and there was no taunt against ministers more applauded than their alleged subserviency to the agitator. The House of Commons seldom rang with more enthusiastic plaudits than when Stanley, in one of his attacks upon the Government, quoted these lines from Shakespeare:

But shall it be that you, that set the crown
Upon the head of this forgetful man,
And, for his sake, wear the detested blot
Of murd'rous subornation—shall it be
That you a world of curses undergo,
Being the agents, or base second means,
The cords, the ladder, or the hangman rather?
Oh! pardon me that I descend so low
To show the line and the predicament,
Wherein you range under this subtle king.
Shall it, for shame, be spoken in these days,
Or fill up chronicles in time to come,
That men of your nobility and power
Did 'gage them both in an unjust behalf,
As both of you—God pardon it! have done?
. . . . . .
And shall it, in more shame, be further spoken,
That you are fooled, discarded, and shook off
By him for whom these shames ye underwent?

He had associated himself, as we have seen, with an extreme type of English Radicalism, and this was in itself sufficient to alienate from him the great majority of educated men, and it made his alliance with the Whigs a source of weakness to his friends. His democratic crusade was probably simply an incident of his Irish policy. An Irishman and a Catholic above all things, passionately attached to his country and his creed, he attacked with but little scruple any institution which stood in their way. To make numbers rather than wealth the source of political power would have then been to increase the relative importance of Ireland in the Empire and of the Catholics in Ireland. In judging his conduct we must remember that the House of Lords had for many years persistently defeated or mutilated every proposal to raise the Catholics into equality with the Protestants, that the bitterest invec-

tives had been directed against him within its walls, and that it appeared idle to expect that Irish tithes could ever be abolished with its consent. Lord Lyndhurst pronounced the Irish to be 'aliens in race, in country, and religion.' O'Connell retorted by fierce denunciations of an hereditary caste overriding the decisions of the representatives of the people. The Tory party desired to restrict the franchise in Ireland and had already abolished the forty-shilling freeholders. O'Connell met their policy by maintaining the natural right of every man to a vote. His opponents often appealed without scruple, and with eminent success, to the anti-Papal and anti-Irish feeling which was so strong in the lower strata of the English population. He retaliated by placing himself at the head of the wild movement for radical reform, and he carried his propagandism not only into the great towns of the north of England, but also into Calvinistic Scotland. The Radical party was at this time singularly deficient in eloquence, and Hume, who was its most prominent member, was perhaps the most tangled and inarticulate speaker who ever succeeded as a leader in England. 'He would speak better,' O'Connell once said, 'if he finished one sentence before he began the next but one after.' O'Connell, trusting to his own marvellous powers of popular oratory, defied religious prejudices and national antipathy, and rarely failed to win a momentary triumph; but neither his language nor his opinions were suited to a cultivated English taste.

He was, however, never in the true sense of the word a revolutionist. For the continental type of revolutionist he had, indeed, a cordial detestation. He hated appeals to physical force and general attacks on property; he always declared that liberty and religion were indissolubly connected, and he refused all alliance

with Chartists and Republicans. Even at the time when a succession of kings and heirs to the throne had been violently hostile to him and his cause, he had maintained, with few exceptions, a remarkable reticence in speaking of the sovereign, and when Queen Victoria came to the throne he welcomed her accession with a perfect transport of enthusiastic loyalty. The fact that her sympathies were supposed to be strongly with Lord Melbourne and his Government, and her quarrel with Sir Robert Peel about the Ladies of the Bedchamber which brought back the Melbourne Ministry for a few months after its defeat in 1839, had no doubt something to say to his enthusiasm, and he made full use of the unpopularity of the Queen in extreme Tory circles, and of the foolish talk of some Orangemen about placing their champion, the Duke of Cumberland, on the throne.

Both in public and in private his language of personal and passionate devotion to the young Queen was more like that of a knight-errant to his mistress than of a sober politician. At her Proclamation at St. James's his mighty voice was heard above all others, cheering and calling on others to cheer. Ireland, he declared in one of his first speeches after the Accession, was deeply loyal to her young and lovely Queen, and he could get 500,000 brave Irishmen to defend her if she was menaced. For the first time in Irish history there was a monarch on the throne who was in full sympathy with Ireland; her ministry was the first during six centuries to desire honestly and faithfully to serve the people of Ireland, and it was the duty of all good Irishmen to rally round her throne and support her ministers. Notwithstanding the evil reputation left by the party known as the 'King's friends' at the beginning of the reign of George III. he desired at once to christen his

own party 'the Queen's friends,' and he made this his chief election cry.

His exultation when the Queen refused to yield to the dictation of Sir Robert Peel about the Bedchamber Ladies was unbounded. 'Hurrah for the darling little Queen!' he wrote; 'Peel is out, Melbourne is in again. . . . . The scoundrel Tories insisted on her parting with all her Court. She has shown great firmness and excellent heart. The best of her race, the country will respond to her call.' 'We owe all to the darling Queen.' He wished her to be asked as soon as possible to visit Ireland, and promised her the most enthusiastic greeting.[1] Long after, and in the midst of the repeal movement, he was accustomed at the monster meetings to call for cheers for the Queen, which were enthusiastically given, and he seldom lost an opportunity of inculcating the duty and the policy of loyalty to her throne.

He never indeed had any real wish to sever the connection between the two countries, and in strong loyalty to the throne he saw the best corrective to some dangerous tendencies which were arising. He was evidently prepared to support extensions of the royal prerogative much greater than English Liberalism would tolerate. He wished and hoped that the personal influence of the Queen should be exerted in favour of the Melbourne Ministry and in opposition to the Tories, and relying on the fact that it was an old prerogative of the sovereign to send out writs to different towns or counties, authorising them to send members to Parliament, he even maintained that the sovereign could repeal the Union without the intervention of the Legislature, and restore the Irish Parliament by simply summoning

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 178–185.

three hundred Irish constituencies to send members to Dublin.[1]

He was far too able a man not to have understood that, whatever legal or historical arguments might be advanced in its favour, such a course was practically impossible in the nineteenth century, and it is difficult to believe that he can have been wholly insensible to the very patent fact that there is hardly a country in the world less suited for a pure democracy than Ireland. For the present, however, everything that strengthened democracy there strengthened his own power, and he probably did not greatly look beyond. He does not appear to have had any real sympathy with those who desired a Parliament consisting of a single chamber, nor was he altogether opposed to the hereditary principle in an Upper Chamber. One of his favourite proposals was that the people should elect as an Upper Chamber 150 out of the existing hereditary peers, who were not to number less than 500.[2] But if he was surpassed by many in the violence of his proposals, he was surpassed by few in the violence of his language, and this not merely in Ireland, but in England. In a letter addressed to the reformers of Bristol in 1832, he called on them to rescue 'the rights of Englishmen from the fangs of the corrupt, sordid, peculating, borough-mongering aristocracy.'[3] He described the first reformed House of Commons which carried the Coercion Bill as consisting of '600 scoundrels.'[4] He brought down upon himself a formal censure of the House, by speaking—not, it must be owned, without some reason—of the 'foul perjury' of the election committees, and his language in his political tours through England and

[1] O'Neill Daunt, i. 152–153.
[2] Fitzpatrick, ii. 80–81.
[3] Fagin, ii. 153.
[4] Ibid. p. 226.

Scotland, if it won for him the cheers of many crowded meetings and led to receptions at many public banquets, disgusted moderate men, and compelled Lord John Russell on the part of the Government very emphatically to disavow all connection with his mission.

In Parliament explosions of this kind were not numerous, and in spite of great provocation his language was usually moderate and decorous,[1] but he always drew a broad distinction between his language inside and outside the House; and he never fully realised the deep-seated Conservatism of the English nature. He evidently believed that the burst of revolutionary feeling that accompanied the French Revolution of 1830, and largely helped in producing the Reform Bill of 1832, was likely to submerge the chief bulwarks of the Constitution. In a very private letter written at the end of 1830, and relating to the draft of a will which he had to draw up, he expressed his desire that the trustees should be empowered to invest 'in private in contradistinction to public securities,' as he believed from the aspect of the times that public securities would soon become of little value, and that there was a great probability that a large part of the interest of the National Debt would be repudiated.'[2] 'The interior of England,' he added, 'is in a frightful situation. I

[1] On one occasion, in a debate on the Arms Bill of 1843, O'Connell provoked interruption that almost drowned his voice. When this had a little subsided he exclaimed that he was not going to be put down 'by beastly bellowings!' upon which a member rose and gravely observed that this epithet 'beastly' was out of order when applied to the exclamations of members of that House. O'Connell professed his willingness to retract the obnoxious expression, but added, 'that he had never heard of any bellowings that were not beastly.' The Speaker decided that the epithet was contary to order, but not more so than the ejaculations that elicited it.'

[2] Fitzpatrick, i. 233–234.

really do not know what remedy can be applied.' 'I do think,' he wrote during the Reform struggle, we shall live to see the hereditary peerage abolished in England.'[1] In one of his speeches on agricultural distress in 1834, he justly scandalised the best men by openly advocating in Parliament a reduction of the interest of the National Debt as the natural remedy. 'The interest of the debt,' he said, 'must be reduced. It was twenty-nine millions. Let the noble lord strike off one-sixth of the interest, and that would give him four and a half millions to begin with. . . . Talk of the cant of national faith indeed! the national faith so called was national injustice. . . . If at the end of twelve months one-sixth were not sufficient let them off another sixth from the interest.'[2]

His dislike and distrust of the English character constantly appears. It was not surprising in a Catholic and a Celt, who had grown up when large parts of the penal laws were still in force and who was deeply imbued with the tragical history of Ireland, and it was strengthened by the treatment he received in England. It was with considerable reluctance that he was accepted as an original member of the Reform Club,[3] and after his attack on Lord Alvanley a motion was formally made and powerfully supported, though finally rejected, for expelling him from Brooks's. English society looked on him as a kind of Pariah, and he was not in real touch with any English party. He detested with an impartial detestation the Tories who were led by Wellington and Peel, and the Whigs when they were led by Grey and Stanley. The English Radicals were his natural allies, but he quarrelled both with Cobbett

[1] Fitzpatrick, i. 274. [2] Hansard, Feb. 21, 1834.
[3] See a letter of Sir W. Molesworth, quoted in Mrs. Fawcett's *Life of Molesworth*.

and with the Chartists, and even the philosophical Radicals, who in many ways supported his policy, were in reality very alien to him. Nothing could be more unlike him than the cold, doctrinaire, uncompromising and intensely anti-ecclesiastical spirit that prevailed in the little party of the elder Mill, Grote, Molesworth, and the 'Westminster Review.' With the later Whigs he had more sympathy. He was on specially good terms with Melbourne, Russell, Morpeth and Duncannon, and he made a great sacrifice of popularity and influence in order to support them. But his influence over them was never as great as he desired, or as he wished his countrymen to believe, or as the enemies of the Government always maintained, and there are clear signs that he was much disappointed by their rule.

The Castle government under Lord Mulgrave, Lord Morpeth and Drummond was, indeed, very sympathetic to him. A moderate and equitable bestowal of places among his followers; the elevation of a few Catholics to the Privy Council; the removal from the Bench of a conspicuous Orange magistrate who at an election dinner had toasted the battle of the Diamond, and of two or three others who had displayed a violent partisanship, indicated a new spirit in the administration. The insane and wicked custom of hoisting a flag on the Castle on the anniversary of the battles of Aughrim and the Boyne was discontinued. The constabulary force was reorganised, and a large infusion of Catholics did much to mitigate its unpopularity. Faction fights in the south and Orange processions in the north were suppressed with impartial severity, and the Government took the strong and, with large classes, very unpopular line of refusing to permit the employment of the constabulary and military in the collection of tithes except when there was a manifest danger of a breach of the

peace, and of replacing the local magistrates by stipendiary magistrates in districts where party feeling ran very high. The Mulgrave Administration was furiously assailed by the Tory party and by the old supporters of Protestant ascendency, and a vote of censure against it was carried in the House of Lords, but it sincerely desired to govern Ireland in a liberal and impartial spirit. During its continuance the country was politically quiet, and crime, though in some forms still terribly rife, perceptibly diminished.

O'Connell supported it strenuously, loyally, and efficaciously; but the general policy of the Whig ministry was by no means what he desired. They refused to countenance the campaign against the House of Lords which the Radical party looked on as the natural sequel of the Reform Bill. O'Connell disliked and, indeed, in his heart detested their Irish poor law. The tithe war ended by a compromise which was profoundly distasteful to him, for it left the Church all or nearly all its revenue while depriving it of most of its unpopularity. The Irish municipal reform which O'Connell greatly cared for was year after year defeated in the Lords. The reform of the grand juries, though very beneficial to Ireland, was not founded on the democratic basis which he had desired.

One other ground of difference has a melancholy significance. Much credit has been given, and not without justice, to O'Connell for his services to the temperance cause by his support of Father Mathew. But when the Whig Government abolished the grocers' licenses, which were one of the chief sources of intemperance and especially of female intemperance, they found in O'Connell a strenuous opponent. The grocers and distillers formed a large portion of his followers, and he took up their cause with the utmost vehemence.

'I never,' he wrote, 'in my life was so anxious about any matter of detail as I was and am on that subject.'[1] The Whigs, he complained, were like an old hat stuck in a broken pane to keep out the cold—good only because they kept out the Tories.

His letters in 1837 and the following years are often in a strain of deep dejection. Much was due to the recent death of his wife to whom he was deeply attached, but causes of another kind contributed largely to his despondency. He repeatedly declared his readiness to abandon repeal if what he considered justice to Ireland was attained under the Union, but he soon found or believed that by these declarations he had lost a great part of his popularity, and it was still further shaken by his opposition to the poor law and by his courageous denunciation of trade-union outrages.[2] He felt the change acutely, and it is evident from his correspondence that money troubles were rapidly increasing. The heyday of his popularity, he said, was gone. The national tribute had sunk very low. The country had deserted him. 'I vainly think that if Ireland thought fit to support me I might still be useful, but it is plain I have worn out my claim on the people.'[3]

He had founded in 1836 a new society, called 'The General Association of Ireland,' for the purpose of obtaining the abolition of tithes and a municipal reform, and a new 'Irish rent' on the same basis as the Catholic rent was to be its essential feature, but it appears to

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[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 61–64, 141, 201.

[2] 'What a curious Actæon-like fate would it be if O'Connell were to be murdered by a mob! He has been in no small danger. In his speeches on poor laws and much more against the combinators he has shown his usual skill, but a courage which he certainly never displayed before.'—Archbishop Whately to Senior, Jan. 25, 1838. Whately's *Life*, i. 414.

[3] Fitzpatrick, ii. 142, 195.

have met with no enthusiasm and was soon after dissolved. Repeal, as O'Connell clearly saw, was the only question for which the people really cared, and he was longing to take it up again. In a letter written in June 1838 to Fitzpatrick he writes, 'Every day convinces me we must repeal. There is nothing else for it. Everything else is trifling and childish. I will not ask anything for any son of mine. I hate the idea. God forgive me! but I am heart-sore at many disappointments. Yet I live for the repeal. The enmity to the Union was my first effort; it will be my last; and, idle as it may seem, I *do* hope for success.'[1]

Writing to the same intimate friend in the summer of the following year, and under the bond of the strictest secrecy, he confided to him that he was profoundly unhappy; that he looked on himself as in danger of ruin; that the country was plainly tired of him; that he did not believe that he could long survive the desertion of the people. 'It weighs upon my heart and interferes with my health. . . . At my time of life mental agony is poisonous.' In the summer of 1839 he went into a religious retreat at Mount Melleray in hopes of regaining his calm. 'My own prospects appear to me daily darker and more dark. It does mortify me, but it does not surprise me that I have exhausted the bounty of the Irish people. God help me! What shall I do?' He even talked of retiring finally to a monastery. 'I want a period of retreat to think of nothing but eternity.'[2]

He was mixed up much in financial schemes. He had become director and leading shareholder of the 'National Bank,' and he had borrowed largely from it. He wrote letters urgently dissuading some of his fol-

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 69–72, 142.

[2] Ibid. pp. 193–195.

lowers from following his own example, and impairing the commercial and industrial prosperity of Ireland by encouraging a run on the banks for gold. He was violently hostile to the Bank of Ireland, which he described as an 'Orange Confederacy,' and opposed with all his power the renewal of its charter. He made a fierce attack on Guinness's Brewery, and an attempt was made by the repeal party to produce an organised resolution to boycott its porter. Political grounds were put forward as the reason, but it is probably no breach of charity to infer that it was not unconnected with the fact that one of O'Connell's sons had become a large shareholder in a rival establishment.[1] In 1838 he was again offered by the Government the office of Master of the Rolls, and there was some conversation about offering him, as an alternative, that of Chief Baron, but he declined, though not without reluctance and hesitation.[2] Some of his followers, apparently with his approbation, had taken a different course, and Sheil received successively from the Melbourne Ministry a Commissionership of Greenwich Hospital, the Vice-Presidentship of the Board of Trade, and the permanent post of Judge Advocate. O'Connell still supported the Government as an independent member, and its days were probably somewhat prolonged by the death of the King and the accession of Queen Victoria. Still at the election of 1837, which followed the accession, its majority was only about 25. O'Connell held his own seat at Dublin, and defended it successfully against a petition. His

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 198–200.

[2] Ibid. pp. 142–144. See, too, O'Neill Daunt, i. 36–37. There is some dispute about the alleged offer of the post of Chief Baron. O'Connell more than once spoke of it as a distinct offer, but Lord J. Russell afterwards positively declared in Parliament that no such offer had been made. See his speech in Hansard and compare with it the speech of Hume in the same debate, June 2, 1843.

followers were somewhat increased, and the feeble Government depended more than ever upon his support, but he could not fail to see that it was almost at its last gasp, and he was himself eagerly looking forward to resuming his career as an agitator.

It was about this time that he completed the first volume of his Memoir on Irish history. It never reached a second volume, and it cannot be said to have done him much credit. Its spirit is well indicated by the motto from Moore:

> On our side is virtue and Erin,
> On theirs is the Saxon and guilt.

It is a choice specimen of a kind of history that is still abundantly written in Ireland—a 'history' consisting of a long catalogue of the crimes and oppressions perpetrated by English government in Ireland, aggravated to the highest point, and with a complete omission of all the circumstances of provocation and palliation. It is a picture of an innocent and long-suffering people persistently crushed by almost demoniacal tyranny. In the tragic history of Ireland it was not difficult for a skilful advocate to select authentic facts to support an indictment, but in history, even more than in most other things, half truths are the worst of falsehoods. The book was not published till 1842, when the repeal agitation had begun. It was dedicated to the Queen, and a profusion of italics, capital letters, and notes of exclamation were employed to give greater emphasis to its charges.

A close alliance had sprung up between O'Connell and Archbishop MacHale, one of the most violent and seditious of the Irish prelates, a bitter enemy of the national system of education, and a strong and acrimoni-

ous opponent of Archbishop Murray. MacHale commanded at this time almost absolutely the representation of Connaught, and O'Connell always wrote to him in a strain of what a Protestant would regard as servile deference. He endeavoured, however, though with little success, to appease his quarrel with Archbishop Murray, and he refused to follow the advice of MacHale, who desired him to urge on his special objects by putting pressure on the Government and threatening to go into opposition to them. O'Connell assured him that such a course would be perfectly useless—that the Government, and especially Lord John Russell, were only too anxious to find a pretext for resigning, and that it was idle to attempt to influence or intimidate them. 'I know it,' he said, 'from experience. I have tried it and totally failed.' 'Besides this, if a quarrel broke out, for one Irishman the ministry would lose they would gain three Tories.' On neither side of the House was there any real sympathy for Ireland.[1]

He was longing for a new agitation, and in the autumn of 1838 he founded a society called the Precursors—usually shortened into 'Cursers'—for the purpose of renewing agitation for the repeal of the Union.

It professed, as its name imported, not to deal immediately with repeal but to prepare the way. The tithe rent-charge was to be the first subject dealt with. Under the existing law, as we have seen, twenty-five per cent. of the original tithe-charge had been abolished in consideration of the landlords undertaking the payment of the remainder. O'Connell thought that by giving the landlords another fifteen or even twenty-five per cent. he could induce them to consent to this remainder being appropriated to purposes of general util-

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 164, 168–169, 173–174.

ity, and that if this and real corporate reform were established ninety-nine out of every hundred Irishmen of all persuasions would be favourable to a domestic Parliament.[1] Another expedient which he proposed was that the tithe rent-charge as a whole should be diverted from the Church and employed to lighten the weight of the new poor rate. The omens, however, were not favourable to O'Connell. The Government, though depending on the votes of his followers, adopted a very menacing attitude towards the Precursor Society, and was plainly ready at all hazards to defend the Union.[2] The Irish gentry, both Catholic and Protestant, gave no encouragement either to the designs upon the tithe rent-charge or to the repeal agitation which was to follow. With the exception of MacHale the bishops were very doubtful. O'Connell complains bitterly of the apathy in Ireland. He found some of his greatest friends as torpid, to use one of his own expressive images, 'as a flea in a wet blanket.'

He urged vehemently the necessity for renewed agitation, but 'peaceful, legal, and constitutional,' an agitation if practicable for repeal; if this proved for the present impossible, at least for complete corporate reform, extension of the suffrage, larger Irish representation in Parliament, the appropriation to public purposes of the tithe rent-charge. All this would tend to lay the foundation for repeal. He very emphatically disclaimed any wish to separate the two countries. 'There lives not a man,' he said in one of his speeches, 'less desirous of a separation between the two countries; there lives not a man more deeply convinced that the connection between them, established on the basis

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. p. 147–148.

[2] See a letter of O'Connell to MacHale, October 1838. Fitzpatrick, ii. 149.

of one king and separate parliaments, would be of the utmost value to the happiness of both countries and the liberties of the civilised world.[1]

In May 1839 the Government, being all but defeated on a Jamaica Bill, resigned, and Wellington and Peel were called to office, but after an interval of about a fortnight the dispute about the Ladies of the Bedchamber gave the Melbourne Ministry a new lease of feeble life, which lasted till after the General Election in the summer of 1841. I have already described O'Connell's exultation at the conduct of the Queen, and he hoped, or pretended to hope, that it was going to have lasting effects in favour of the Whigs. In one of his letters, dated February 1840, he solemnly declares his conviction that the Tories would never regain the government of England; 'Blessed be God, the Queen is exceedingly angry with the Tories.' If he really believed this it speaks little for his sagacity, but other letters seem to show that he was not as sanguine as he appeared. The Queen, he said, is quite true, but can she resist both Houses of Parliament? He was not blind to the fact that the Government was fast breaking up, and he was more and more urgent on the necessity of organising a great agitation.[2] There runs at the same time through his letters the same unpleasant strain of pecuniary need mingling with his political aspirations. The country, he said, was tired of supporting him. The Catholic clergy are apparently holding back from the repeal agitation. 'The tribute has not been successful this year' (1841).[3] In April 1840 he founded the Repeal Association. Every one who paid one pound a month became a member. For a shilling he was enrolled a

[1] See a letter of O'Connell to MacHale, October 1838. Fitzpatrick, ii. 274.

[2] Fitzpatrick, ii. 204, 222, 235, 237. [3] Ibid. pp. 206, 239, 260,

repealer. The rank and file paid one copper each month.[1]

In the last year of the Melbourne Ministry the long delayed Irish Municipal Reform Bill was carried, though in a form much more restricted than O'Connell had hoped. It witnessed also a determined attempt of Stanley in opposition to the Government to carry a Registration Bill, so severe in its provisions that it would have practically disfranchised a large portion of the Irish electorate. O'Connell fiercely opposed it and it was for the present abandoned, but the attempt probably helped to win converts to repeal. A Bill, introduced by Lord Morpeth to neutralise Stanley's Bill by extending the franchise, was defeated; it was speedily followed by a vote of want of confidence, a dissolution and a general election, at which the Government were utterly beaten. In the autumn of 1841 a strong Tory Government under Sir Robert Peel came into office, and continued unbroken till July 1846.

A new phase in the life of O'Connell now began. He well knew that he had to face persistent hostility, and he at once flung himself into the repeal agitation. The wisdom of those who had dissuaded him from abandoning his safe Kerry seat for the representation of Dublin was at this time clearly shown. He had won his Dublin seat in 1832. He had been at the head of the poll at the election of 1835, but was unseated by petition. He regained the seat at the election of 1837 which followed the accession of the Queen, but had again to bear the cost of defending it against a petition, and in the election of 1841 he was finally defeated. Two seats, however—Meath and Cork—were at once at his disposal, and he selected the latter. He maintained,

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 238 ; O'Neill Daunt, i. 59-60.

and the event showed with great truth, that not only was repeal the one question the mass of the Irish people really cared for, but that in spite of the present hesitation the Irish priesthood would throw themselves into it. Again and again in his directions to his agents and followers in different parts of Ireland the same advice occurs: 'Be sure to have everywhere the approval of the priests.'

It became evident to him that though the elements of a great agitation were present, it must be an agitation mainly Catholic, democratic and ecclesiastical. Nearly all the members of the Irish aristocracy, the overwhelming majority of the gentry of both creeds, and not a few of his old followers deprecated another agitation, and declared in no ambiguous terms that they would be no parties to it. Sheil, the most eloquent of his former supporters, was utterly hostile. The Orange spirit in Ulster had been inflamed by the events of the last few years to a perfect fury of 'No Popery' fanaticism, but O'Connell had some hope that he could divide Ulster, and that the political liberalism of the Presbyterians would draw many of them to his side.

He soon found that he was mistaken, and the Presbyterians had at this time among their ministers a leader, who exercised during many years a commanding influence over their policy. Henry Cooke was a man of much the same stamp of character and much the same order of ability as his contemporary, Hugh McNeill, who was almost equally prominent in the Church politics of the Episcopalian Evangelicals. Both were Low Churchmen of an extreme and narrow type, and also passionate politicians, and in each case an intense hatred and dread of Popery was the mainspring of their policy. Both had in a pre-eminent degree the

charm of voice and manner and appearance, and were pulpit and platform orators of extraordinary power, and both united with very real ability a domineering temper, a singleness of purpose, and a restless and intrepid energy which gave them an ascendency over large masses of men. Cooke had already almost destroyed the influence in Ulster Presbyterianism of the New Light or Arian party which had for a long time been considerable within it, and he exerted all his power to prevent any sectional Presbyterian interest from dividing the Protestants of Ulster. He was on terms of intimate friendship with Lord Roden and the other Episcopalian Orangemen, and he steadily preached that all minor differences must be sunk and the whole force of Northern Protestantism united against the incursions of Popery, and the danger of Popish ascendency which would follow repeal.

O'Connell in the beginning of 1841 announced his intention of visiting Belfast to take part in a great repeal banquet, and it was intended that demonstrations in his honour should be organised in the chief towns through which he passed. He was at once met by a challenge from Dr. Cooke to discuss publicly the question of repeal. It was drawn up in insulting terms, and O'Connell, in a speech at Dublin, declined it in language of contemptuous ridicule. Much ribaldry, about equal in its merits or demerits, was exchanged at a distance between them, but the result was that when the time for going to Ulster arrived the province was in such a flame of indignation that the enterprise could not be carried out without imminent danger. O'Connell had no wish to produce sanguinary riots. The public demonstrations were abandoned. O'Connell ordered his post-horses under another name, and accompanied by a few armed friends and with a careful

concealment of the hours of their journey the party started for Belfast. His life was, or was believed to be, in danger from bands of Orangemen who were sent to meet him, and when he at length arrived he confined himself to his hotel and refused to attend a repeal meeting which had been convened. He addressed a crowd from his hotel, but amid such clamour that he was scarcely heard, while banners bearing the inscription 'Cooke's Challenge' were flaunted before him.

He appeared, however, at the great dinner to which he had been invited and was received with enthusiasm, but his hearers were almost all Catholics. He addressed them in his usual strain of flattery. Never had he met men after his own heart till he came to Belfast. Never, or scarcely ever, had he seen such a galaxy of beauty as looked down on him from the ladies' gallery. He was very scornful about 'the boxing buffoon of a divine' and the 'truculent threatening' of his followers, but he lost no time in quitting Belfast under a strong police escort for Donaghadee and crossing over to Scotland. As he started on his journey southwards one of his post-horses suddenly died, which Dr. Cooke assured him was a providential warning.[1] It was plain that there was a spirit in the Protestant north that would never compromise with repeal—that was prepared to resist it even at the cost of civil war.

There was, however, one passage in his Belfast speech which had a truer and a nobler ring than the flattery or the ribaldry I have quoted. It was when he met the taunts of those who accused him of having come to Ulster as the agent of a persecuting and despotic Church, of a Church which had marked its steps

[1] Compare for the two versions of this expedition Porter's *Life of Dr. Cooke* and O'Neill Daunt's *Recollections*, i. 240–253.

through history by fire and by blood, and which was and ever would be the deadly enemy of human liberty. To such a charge, he said, his whole life was a sufficient answer. 'I have lived but for the promotion of freedom, unrestrained freedom of conscience to all classes and sects of the human family; I have lived but to be the advocate of civil and religious liberty all over the world, and I have not, I think, lived in vain.'

The claim of O'Connell to have been a firm and consistent advocate of religious freedom is a just one, and it is from this aspect that his career has much more than an Irish interest. We have already seen the ardour with which before Catholic Emancipation was carried he supported the abolition of the Test Act in favour of the Dissenters. He was a steady supporter of the admission of Jews into Parliament, and he boasted that this was one of the few questions on which the Irish members were unanimous. He was one of those who protested against a British soldier having been punished for refusing to pay respect to a procession of the Host at Malta, and whenever there was a question of religious liberty for men of any creed or of any land his voice was always heard in favour of liberty. He had at first, it is true, looked with great disfavour on the French Liberals under Charles X., whom he regarded as 'atheists and infidels,'[1] but when the Revolution of 1830 was actually accomplished and proved itself not inimical to the Church he received it with delight, and there was no feature in it which he praised more than the separation it effected between the Church and the State, which he predicted would be in the highest degree beneficial to religion.[2] He welcomed with passionate enthusiasm the Belgian Revo-

[1] Maddryn's *Ireland and her Rulers*, i. 107.
[2] Fitzpatrick, i. 222–224.

lution which emancipated a Catholic country from its connection with a Protestant one, but at the same time established a free constitution with perfect civil and religious equality under a Protestant sovereign. It was one of his first and deepest convictions that democracy was the future of the world, and that it was in the interest and in the power of the Church fully to accept its conditions and to mould it by its influence.

His speeches and letters are full of passages asserting this in the strongest and most unqualified terms. 'As a Catholic, I abhor and repudiate persecution.' 'One of the greatest crimes which a Christian can commit is to persecute any human being on the score of religion.' 'The principle of my public life is that no one Christian should be compelled to contribute to the support of a Church to which he does not belong or of a religion from which he dissents.' 'We combine the principle of the fullest civil liberty with the most entire religious fidelity to the faith and doctrine of the Catholic Church.' 'It is to the Catholic Church that the honest spirit of democracy ought to be and must be most useful. In an honest democracy there would be no paramount interest to subjugate the Church or to seek to make it the feature of the State. . . . Under such a Government the Church would be free; uncontrolled by temporal enactments and totally unchecked by legislative restrictions. . . . The hierarchy would meet no impediment in their arrangements touching spiritual matters, which would thus be for ever separated from merely political concerns. The differences on matters of belief between various classes of Christians would be kept open to free discussion and tranquil reasoning. And from contests of that description the Catholic Church would have everything to hope and nothing to fear.' 'The spirit of democracy,' he used

to argue, 'is more favourable to the cause of morality and religion than the monarchical spirit.'[1]

Other passages to the same effect might be easily cited. Himself the greatest of popular leaders, O'Connell had no fear of the people, and the fusion of democracy and Catholicism was the ideal of his life. He was accustomed to dilate on the number of small republics that flourished in the middle ages when the ascendency of Catholicism was most complete; on the rare cases in which in America and Europe religious toleration was granted after the Reformation by Catholic States; on the many instances in which despotic governments, Catholic as well as Protestant, had imposed restrictions on the Church. He recognised that the democratic system of the Catholic worship, and the organisation of a priesthood which threw open to all its members the highest posts, were in harmony with the political tendencies of the time; he believed—and with much truth—that both the dogmas and the worship and the sacerdotal organisation of his Church gave it peculiar powers of acting on great masses of ignorant men, and he hoped that it would become the guide of the newly enfranchised nations.

It is not surprising that an attitude of this kind should have been very strange to continental observers, who were accustomed to witness the action of the Church in purely Catholic countries, and were imbued with what were undoubtedly its genuine traditions. A curious and interesting pamphlet, published by a French gentleman who visited Ireland in 1826, describes the kind of language which from one end of Ireland to another was used on Catholic platforms at the great meetings for promoting Catholic Emancipation. Five

[1] Cusack, ii. 229, 285–290, 350, 412. See, too, O'Neill Daunt, i. 303.

propositions, he said, seemed to be generally received: (1) that the State should have no established religion, but should preserve neutrality between them all; (2) that Salvation was possible in all religions provided they were honestly believed; (3) that it was a wrong thing to convert public education into a monopoly for any particular class or sect; (4) that the spirit of proselytism was deserving of censure and each creed or sect ought to remain quiet within its own limits; and (5) that in order to keep the clergy virtuous it is requisite to keep them poor. He had heard some of Sheil's speeches against Protestant proselytising societies, and came to the conclusion that in Ireland you may laugh as much as you think proper at the Bible, provided you do so in attacking Bible societies. On the whole, he said, Catholicism and Protestantism seemed in this country to have changed places. Protestants were dogmatic and intolerant; Catholics had suddenly become almost philosophical.[1]

The picture is somewhat overdrawn, and O'Connell would certainly not have subscribed to it in all its parts, but it undoubtedly contained much truth, and O'Connell maintained with extraordinary success a union between the most fervent Catholicism and a genuine attachment to both civil and religious liberty. He was in this respect in close sympathy and alliance with a brilliant school of continental Catholics who maintained the paradox that Catholicism was the natural ally of freedom, and the more tenable position that in the new conditions of society it was more likely to flourish by appealing to popular favour than by allying itself with kings or governments or aristocracies. Gregory XVI., it is true, gave no countenance to the dreams of Liberal

[1] Letters of Duvergier on the State of Ireland; Wyse's *Hist. of the Catholic Association*, ii., Appendix No. xvii.

Catholicism, and he condemned freedom of conscience as emphatically as his successor many years later did in the Syllabus. Lamennais, the great leader of the school, soon perceived the hopelessness of his task and broke away from the Church, but Montalembert and Lacordaire remained to the last in their own words 'penitent Catholics and impenitent Liberals.'

They had no sympathy with the Gallican school. They agreed with O'Connell, who declared his detestation of the 'so-called Gallican liberties,' which in their eyes meant the enslavement of the Church by the State. Their ideal was a perfectly independent Church, supreme in its own sphere, but asking no assistance from the secular arm; neither patronised nor aided nor coerced by the State. It was the ideal afterwards proclaimed by Cavour in the happy phrase, 'a free Church in a free State.' They pointed to the flourishing condition of the Church in Belgium, England, and the United States, and they contrasted its freedom with the many trammels imposed upon its action by the Catholic governments of the old *régime* and with the bitter hatred and the corroding indifference it had then to encounter. In Italy kindred views were maintained in the writings of Gioberti, and the early Liberalism of Pio IX. kindled unbounded hopes that were speedily overcast. Nowhere, however, did the Liberal school find their ideal so fully realised as in O'Connell—the Liberator of his co-religionists—the unflinching advocate of liberty in all its forms—a Catholic of the most severe and fervent orthodoxy, acting in all his policy in the closest union with an unpaid and independent priesthood, and at the same time swaying with unrivalled power the democracy of his country.

Gibbon has well remarked how vastly the reputation of an eminent man is magnified if his career is blended

with the fortunes of a great, permanent, world-wide organisation like the Church of Rome. Of this truth O'Connell is a conspicuous example. Ireland by her geographical position is far removed from the main currents of European life, though there have been periods when for a short time she has been brought into the stream. There was a time when Irish monks played a great part in the conversion of Europe to Christianity, and when Irish monasteries were renowned throughout Christendom. During the fierce struggles that took place between the Reformation and the Revolution of 1688 Ireland was a card, though not a very important one, in the game, and vast multitudes of Irish Catholics afterwards enlisted in the armies of the Continent. But, except as a recruiting ground for foreign armies, Ireland during the eighteenth century had fallen into complete obscurity. Swift, Sterne, and Goldsmith were probably the only Irishmen who were widely known, and they were only known—as they would perhaps themselves have desired—as English writers. The Irish Parliament, its politics, its independence, and its abolition excited no interest beyond the seas, and it is probable that there were very few men either in France or Italy who had even heard the name of Grattan. But O'Connell obtained almost from the beginning of his career a European reputation. As the champion, and the victorious champion, of the Church he was acclaimed wherever Catholicism prevailed, while the special school which sought to ally Catholicism with democracy looked upon him as their highest representative. Montalembert in a book of brilliant and impassioned eloquence recounted the triumphs of the Church in the nineteenth century.[1] In that stately panorama

[1] *Des Intérêts Catholiques au XIX^e^ Siècle.*

no figure stands out with a grander prominence than the Irish agitator, and when O'Connell died Ventura in the capital of Christendom preached his funeral oration, describing him as one of the very greatest Catholics of his age. His unique position as the untitled, unendowed leader of a great democracy, wielding a gigantic power by the pure force of his eloquence, struck the imagination even of those who cared little for the religious aspects of his work, and it is no exaggeration to say that before the close of his life he filled a space in the thoughts of men which no Irishman and very few English statesmen have equalled.

The difference between the English and the continental estimate of his career was naturally very great, and it is remarkable that Newman, who was destined to be the greatest English Catholic of his age, mentions among the deterrent influences he had to encounter in his journey to the Church 'the unspeakable aversion' with which the policy and acts of O'Connell inspired him.[1]

Among Protestant statesmen there was a widespread belief that he only used his religion as a tool for attaining the objects of his own selfish ambition. But whatever else may be doubtful in the career of O'Connell, it is quite certain that this theory is untrue. No one who follows the details we now possess of his private life, who reads his unstudied letters to his dearest relations and his conversations with his most intimate friends, will doubt that at least from an early period of his married life he was a sincere and ardent Catholic. In the busiest days of his professional and political life he was exemplary in attending mass and observing the fasts of his Church, and his conversation, though often

[1] Apologia, p. 223 (1st Ed.).

violent, indecorous, and scurrilous, appears to have been absolutely free from any taint of impurity or profanity. His most private letters show that if his religion did not correct the very manifest faults of his character, it had at least sunk deeply into his nature, and he could treat religious questions, even of the most delicate kind, with a tender and discriminating touch. Some letters which he wrote to one of his daughters, who was passing through a phase of deep religious melancholy, are striking proofs of this.[1]

He was fond of theology, and sometimes even took part in public controversial discussions with Protestants. In 1826 he published a long letter, addressed to an Irish clergyman, on the points of difference between the two Churches,[2] and in 1839 he wrote two violent letters of controversy against the Methodists. He defended in conversation the orthodox doctrine that heresy was even worse than immorality, as it withdraws men from the absolving power of the Church.[3] It was noticed that when attending Cobbett's funeral he refused to enter the Protestant church, and Duffy has observed that he employed his despotic power in the Catholic Association in discouraging and repressing in the sternest manner any tendency either on the part of priests or laymen to revolt against episcopal authority. He showed himself, it is true, at one time very jealous of political interference on the part of Rome, and cordially subscribed to the saying of O'Neill Daunt, 'As much theology as you please from Rome, but no politics;' but this was quite compatible with the most absolute and fervent devotion to the Holy See as the head of the Church.

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[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 187–190, 196–197. [2] Cusack, ii. 339–370
[3] O'Neill Daunt's *Personal Recollections*, i. 228.

In Ireland he made it his first object to act in the closest union wth the priests, and especially with the bishops, but it would, I believe, be a mistake to suppose that this was wholly due to interested motives. It is quite true that he made an enormous use of the priests in organising his agitations, collecting his tribute, and furthering in every form his interests; but it is equally true that he relied mainly on their political guidance and power to moderate and restrain the democratic movement he had called into being, to keep it within the bounds of the law; to prevent it from degenerating either into armed rebellion or into an attack upon property. It was his firm and abiding conviction that the Irish Catholics must find their political leaders in their priests, and accustom themselves to take no action without their counsel and approval. He would have gladly maintained the guiding power of the Irish aristocracy and gentry if they would join him; he made constant and earnest efforts to win them to his cause, and in cases in which he succeeded he seldom failed to place them in the forefront of the movement; but it soon became evident that neither the Protestant nor the Catholic gentry would favour repeal, and he accordingly fell back more and more upon the influence of the priests. He sought to place them at the head of every political organisation, and to teach the Catholic democracy to go to them on every emergency for advice.

For good or for ill he succeeded, and this is perhaps the most distinctive and the most enduring result of his career. The power of the priesthood in Ireland is, indeed, sometimes misunderstood, and it applies in different degrees to different fields. In matters of education it is practically absolute. The mass of the Irish Catholics regard education as essentially a Church question, and in constituencies in which small farmers and

agricultural labourers form the immense majority of the voters—in a country in which there is scarcely any wealthy or independent middle-class, and in which the Catholic gentry are few, scattered and powerless, priestly influence over Catholic education is overwhelming.

In questions of nationality and in agrarian questions their power is somewhat less. They are often obliged rather to follow than to lead, and they incur great unpopularity and loss of revenue if they resist. They have never succeeded in putting down secret societies which are most formally condemned by their Church, and although their denunciations from the altar have unquestionably led to many agrarian murders, and their habit of habitually absolving condemned murderers without requiring from them any public acknowledgement of their guilt has exercised a moral influence of the worst kind, it would be unjust to attribute to the majority of the priests real sympathy with agrarian crime. But, springing for the most part from the peasant class, they naturally share their feelings for evil as well as for good, and the education of Maynooth has not in this respect done much to improve them. Their influence has been not only anti-Protestant but anti-English, and has tended powerfully to separate the two races. There have been brilliant and admirable exceptions, but on the whole it has not been in favour of self-reliance or of the industrial virtues in which their people are deplorably deficient, and in these latter days they have generally supported the attacks on property, contract, and industrial freedom which have so profoundly debased and demoralised Irish politics. They have been politicians rather than theologians, and the fervour of Irish Catholicism centres much more on the Irish priest than on Rome. At the same time when their restraining power is exercised it is enormous, and

it was never more signally exhibited than in their complete success in paralysing the rebellious movement in 1848. Nor can it be said that the changes of Irish life have greatly diminished it. In the towns, it is true, another spirit has grown up under Fenian and American inspiration. But the influence of town life which is so increasingly dominant in English politics, is in Irish affairs very small, and all over agricultural Catholic Ireland the first object of a parliamentary candidate is to secure the favour of the bishop and the leading priests. This is mainly the work of O'Connell, and it broadly distinguishes Irish democracy or Liberalism from the corresponding movements on the Continent.

O'Connell, as we have seen, had complained in 1840 that the priests were holding aloof from the repeal agitation,[1] and he attributed largely to their apathy and division the defeat of his party at the election of 1841.[2] It was, indeed, very complete, for out of the 105 Irish members returned in that year not more than 19 appear to have been pledged to repeal.[3] There was not a single new recruit, and the majority of those who, nine years before, were avowed repealers, had either lost their seats or abandoned the cause.[4] O'Connell, however, truly foresaw that the hesitation of the priests would not last long, and in 1842 he was able to boast that his great object of committing them to the movement was substantially if not completely attained. In his letter to Lord Shrewsbury, which was published in that year, he states that eleven of the Catholic bishops had enrolled themselves as repealers; that in the two great dioceses of West Meath and Ardagh, which comprised nearly one-third of Ireland, there was not a single priest who had not sent in his contribution to the Repeal

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 239.
[2] Ibid. p. 260.
[3] Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*, p. 479.
[4] Ibid. p. 42.

Association, and that he only knew of one priest who had declared himself publicly, and in print, against the movement. Nearly four-fifths of the priesthood, he believed, were now in its favour. By their potent instrumentality the organisation spread over the greater part of Ireland, though there were few manifestations of real enthusiasm until the latter part of the year, when O'Connell sent a number of 'Repeal Missionaries' through the country. One of the results of their work was that the repeal rent which had greatly languished rapidly increased. But O'Connell himself took during this year a comparatively slight part in the agitation. He spent many months in London attending Parliament, and during the greater part of the year he was Lord Mayor of Dublin, and while he held this office he abstained from repeal meetings.

He continued, however, actively to advise and to organise, and his letter to Lord Shrewsbury, which was now published, was one of the most considerable and perhaps the most valuable of his writings. That great English Catholic nobleman had strongly censured the repeal agitation, the O'Connell tribute, and the alliance of Irish Catholicism with the Whig and Radical parties, and he was also absolutely opposed to the agitation for the abolition of the Corn Laws which was now rising into prominence, and which found in O'Connell a strenuous ally. O'Connell's reply formed in its original edition a pamphlet of not less than 180 pages, and it should be read by everyone who would understand his views at this period of his life.[1] Much of it can hardly fail to be repulsive to every man of good taste. It is full of the coarse abuse, the exaggerated emphasis, the tawdry sentiment that so often disfigured his writ-

[1] It has been reprinted in Miss Cusack's book.

ings; and the strain of vulgarity in which he continually harped on the titles and social eminence of Lord Shrewsbury is peculiarly unbecoming from one who had every right to consider himself as belonging to the old well-born gentry of Ireland. But with all its defects this pamphlet contains pages of admirable reasoning, supported by a vast array of well-selected and well-arranged facts, and it is one of the best defences of his political position. Nowhere else was the case for repeal and the evidence of the declining prosperity of Ireland under the Union more fully argued, and few persons can read it with candour without feeling that on this question O'Connell was animated by a deep and earnest conviction.

It is not superfluous to dwell on the evidences of this sincerity, for the view of those who treat the repeal agitation as essentially a money speculation is certainly not without plausibility. From the confidential correspondence of O'Connell in 1842 I can draw no other conclusion than that he was on the verge of ruin, and that he was only saved from bankruptcy by the assistance of his friend Fitzpatrick, in whose hands the management of the O'Connell tribute established after Catholic Emancipation had been placed,[1] and by the vast sums that the repeal agitation placed at his disposal. 'Want,' he wrote in July, 'is literally killing me. I have grown ten years older from my incessant pecuniary anxiety.' 'I write overwhelmed with affliction. It almost drives me mad. The enclosed which I send to you in the greatest confidence explains that S.'s bill for 420*l.* due on Wednesday week comes upon me. I write again to him to-day in great anxiety.' Two other notes payable in a few weeks were impending.

[1] Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*, p. 16.

Fitzpatrick appears to have come to his aid, and O'Connell writes: 'You have taken a load off my mind. May God bless you. I was actually in despair.'[1] It was not, however, till after the colossal subscriptions of 1843 that his pecuniary burden was substantially removed. 'You will be glad to hear,' he writes to Fitzpatrick in the beginning of 1844, 'that I have broken up the establishment at Darrynane. The saving will be greater than you could calculate. I ought to have done it sooner. I have also made a general clearance of my debts, current and ancient, save what I owe to the Bank. I will, please God, reduce that to a manageable shape when I arrive in Dublin. There is not one single debt unpaid, nor a single bill out . . . save one for some shillings less than 150*l*. . . . This is a pleasing prospect, but to make matters square I must have resort to the tribute.'[2]

On November 1, 1842, O'Connell's mayoralty ceased, and after a short holiday at Darrynane he flung his whole energies into the agitation. His spirits, as was always the case, rose with the applause of great multitudes; and, with the tumultuous excitement that he loved the despondency that had seemed lately to have settled upon him disappeared. He had not yet given up his hope of drawing the Protestants and the gentry into this movement. In a letter written to one of these in this year he expresses his ardent desire to win to the repeal cause 'The Protestant and Presbyterian population;' to place as many as possible of the gentry of these persuasions on the committee of management; and to regulate the progress of repeal by their counsel and assistance; and he adds, 'I most ardently desire to prevent the hurrying of the repeal agitation so fast as

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 289–290. [2] Ibid. ii. 313.

not to give time for all classes and persuasions of Irishmen to join us. All that is wanting is time. So soon as Protestants of all sects combine to obtain our legislative independence the utmost cordiality will prevail, as in 1782, between all Irishmen, and we will be able to make the mighty change with perfect safety to person and property, and to the continuance of the connection between the two countries.'[1]

In the February of 1843 he brought the subject before the Dublin Corporation, and easily carried a vote in favour of a petition for repeal. His conduct as mayor had been so conciliatory and impartial that he had won much popularity even among his opponents in that body, and his speech in bringing forward the repeal question seems to have been better than his speech when introducing it in Parliament in 1834. It is remarkable that the defence of the Union in this debate was entrusted to Isaac Butt, who in after years became himself the leader of the Home Rule movement, and it is not less remarkable that O'Connell predicted that the day would come when his young and brilliant opponent would himself be ranged on the side of repeal. The discussion in the Corporation lasted for three days, and the report of it, which was afterwards published, became one of the most popular manuals of the repeal controversy. O'Connell's speech was very powerful, and it was characterised throughout by a rare moderation of tone, by an extreme and evident desire to allay animosities, and especially to win Protestant support. He dwelt greatly upon the purely legal and pacific character he wished to give to the agitation; on the impossibility of any religious ascendency being established in Ireland; on his determination, while pursuing perfect

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 302.

religious equality, to guard carefully all vested rights, all the life interests of the clergy of the Established Church. 'Remember,' he said, 'that I respect vested rights. There is no living man shall with my consent or with the consent of the Irish people lose one particle of that which he now enjoys. I claim but the reversion.'[1] He declared that it was his desire to preserve the Irish House of Lords, which was almost exclusively Protestant, intact in all its prerogatives, and he reiterated his abhorrence of violence and rebellion and his firm adherence to the connection.

Having prepared the way by this debate, O'Connell began that great series of monster meetings which forms the most striking, if not the most really important, political demonstrations ever known in Ireland. They were not new things, for out-of-door meetings had often been held in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, and on a larger scale in 1840; but those of 1843 far surpassed their predecessors in their magnitude and in the perfection of their organisation. In order to devote himself exclusively to the repeal agitation, O'Connell, in 1843, abstained altogether from parliamentary duties. During this year he occupied, perhaps, the pinnacle of his fame. There are three great instances on record of politicians, discouraged by overwhelming majorities, seceding from Parliament. Grattan gave up his seat and became utterly powerless in the country. Fox retired from the debates, though retaining his seat, and he too became for a time little more than a cipher. O'Connell followed the example of Fox, but he drew with him the attention of Europe. In no previous portion of his career, not even when he had gained emancipation from the humbled ministry of Wellington, did

[1] *Corporation Debate*, p. 66.

he attract greater attention or admiration. Whoever turns over the magazines or newspapers of the period will easily perceive how grandly his figure dominated in politics, how completely he had dispelled the indifference that had so long prevailed on Irish questions, how clearly his agitation stands forth as the great fact of the time.

It would be difficult, indeed, to conceive more imposing demonstrations of public opinion than those vast assemblies which were held in every Catholic county, and attended by almost every adult male. They usually took place upon Sunday morning, in the open air, upon some hillside. At daybreak the mighty throng might be seen, broken into detached groups and kneeling on the greensward around their priests, while the incense rose from a hundred rude altars, and the solemn music of the mass floated upon the gale, and seemed to impart a consecration to the cause. O'Connell stood upon a platform, surrounded by the ecclesiastical dignitaries and by the more distinguished of his followers. Before him the immense assembly was ranged, without disorder or tumult or difficulty; organised with the most perfect skill and inspired with the most unanimous enthusiasm. There is, perhaps, no more impressive spectacle than such an assembly, pervaded by such a spirit, and moving under the control of a single mind. The silence that prevailed through its whole extent during some portions of his address; the concordant cheer bursting from tens of thousands of voices; the rapid transitions of feeling as the great magician struck alternately each chord of passion, and as the power of sympathy, acting and reacting, intensified the prevailing feeling, were sufficient to carry away the most callous, and to influence the most prejudiced; the critic, in the contagious enthusiasm, almost forgot his art, and men

of very calm and disciplined intellects experienced emotions the most stately eloquence of the Senate had failed to produce.[1]

The greatest of all these meetings, perhaps the grandest display of the kind that has ever taken place, was held around the Hill of Tara. According to very moderate computations, about a quarter of a million were assembled there to attest their sympathy with the movement. The spot was well chosen for the purpose. Tara of the Kings, the seat of the ancient royalty of Ireland, has ever been regarded by the Irish people with something of a superstitious awe. The vague legends that cluster around it, the poetry that has consecrated its past, and the massive relics of its ancient greatness that have been from time to time discovered, have invested it in Irish eyes with an ineffable and most fascinating grandeur. It was on this spot that O'Connell, standing by the stone where the kings of Ireland

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[1] The following is Bulwer's description of the scene:—

Once to my sight the giant thus was given,
Walled by wide air and roofed by boundless heaven:
Beneath his feet the human ocean lay,
And wave on wave flowed into space away.
Methought no clarion could have sent its sound
E'en to the centre of the hosts around ;
And, as I thought, rose the sonorous swell,
As from some church-tower swings the silvery bell ;
Aloft and clear from airy tide to tide
It glided easy, as a bird may glide.
To the last verge of that vast audience sent,
It played with each wild passion as it went :
Now stirred the uproar—now the murmurs stilled,
And sobs or laughter answered as it willed.
  Then did I know what spells of infinite choice
To rouse or lull has the sweet human voice.
Then did I learn to seize the sudden clue
To the grand troublous life antique—to view
Under the rock-stand of Demosthenes
Mutable Athens heave her noisy seas.—*St. Stephen's.*

were once crowned, sketched the coming glories of his country. Beneath him, like a mighty sea, extended the throng of listeners. They were so numerous that thousands were unable to catch the faintest echo of the voice they loved so well; yet all remained passive, tranquil and decorous. In no instance did these meetings degenerate into mobs. They were assembled, and they were dispersed, without disorder or tumult; they were disgraced by no drunkenness, by no crime, by no excess. When the Government, in the State trials, applied the most searching scrutiny, they could discover nothing worse than that on one occasion the retiring crowd trampled down the stall of an old woman who sold gingerbread.

This absence of disorder was partly owing to the influence of O'Connell, and partly to that of Father Mathew. His extraordinary career was at this time at its height, and teetotalism was nearly as popular as repeal. The two movements mutually assisted one another, and advanced together. The splendid success of Father Mathew was probably owing in a great measure to the fact that O'Connell had strung the minds of the people to a pitch of almost heroic enthusiasm; and, on the other hand, O'Connell declared that he would never have ventured to hold the monster meetings were it not that he had the teetotallers 'for his policemen.' There was scarcely a Catholic county where these meetings were not held, and those who attended them have been reckoned by millions.

And over all this vast movement O'Connell at this time reigned supreme. There was no rival to his supremacy—there was no restriction to his authority. He played with the fierce enthusiasm he had aroused with the negligent ease of a master; he governed the complicated organisation he had created with a sagacity

that rarely failed. He had made himself the focus of the attention of other lands, and the centre around which most of the rising intellect of his own revolved. He had transformed the whole social system of Ireland; in some respects almost reversed the relative positions of Protestants and Roman Catholics; influenced deeply the representative, the ecclesiastical, the educational institutions, and created a public opinion that surpassed the wildest dreams of his predecessors. Can we wonder at the proud exultation with which he exclaimed, 'Grattan sat by the cradle of his country, and followed her hearse; it was left for me to sound the resurrection trumpet, and to show that she was not dead, but sleeping'?

It was a wonderful position, wholly unlike any other which any popular agitator had attained. There were, no doubt, great exaggerations in the numbers of those who attended the meetings. It is inconceivable that, as was pretended, 1,200,000 persons should have been ranged round the Hill of Tara, and large deductions must be made from the estimated numbers on other occasions, but it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that almost the whole adult Catholic population in three provinces of Ireland assembled in these meetings, moving in great disciplined bodies, countenanced or directed by their priests, and professing the most absolute and enthusiastic devotion to their chief. It is not surprising that such vast demonstrations of physical force should have caused much alarm. It is true that O'Connell had always and in the most emphatic terms declared his abhorrence of all attempts at rebellion. Again and again he repeated in his speeches that he was 'the Apostle of that sect which had already proved that the greatest amount of freedom can be achieved by the force of public opinion, and by the peaceful combina-

tion of religious and honest men.' 'My disposition,' he said, in one of his speeches in 1843, 'is from natural bias averse to deeds of violence, and the certain knowledge that the time cannot be far distant when I must render an account of my guardianship before my God at the peril of an eternity of weal or woe ought to make me circumspect in all my actions. Soon must I leave this fleeting scene. What is the world and what are the world's glories to me that, in order to grasp them for an instant, I should imperil my immortal soul? Not for all the universe contains would I, in the struggle of what I conceive my country's cause, consent to the effusion of a single drop of human blood except my own. Any other man's blood I dare not spill. I have too much of it on my soul already.'[1]

But, though this language was, I believe, sincere, the danger of the vast popular organisation was very manifest, and as its strength and popularity increased the tone of menace became more and more apparent. It was noticed that the cards of the volunteer repealers were ornamented with pictures of pikes—that they gave the names and dates of four battles in which the Irish had defeated the Danes or the English, and also some significant statistics giving a list of independent nations which were inferior to Ireland both in population and wealth. On one occasion, when a great English newspaper proclaimed that steam had placed Ireland irrevocably in the grasp of England, O'Connell retorted amid the rapturous cheers of vast multitudes, that if steam had bridged the Channel, it had also brought Ireland close to America. When troubles with France arose, O'Connell said that the first shot between England and France would secure repeal. The mere fact

[1] *Corporation Address*, pp. 212, 216. The last allusion is to the death of D'Esterre.

that in county after county and over the space of many months tens of thousands of the population were accustomed to march to the meetings in disciplined processions, obeying absolutely the word of order and with all the appearance of gigantic armies, was in itself sufficiently alarming, and the speeches of O'Connell, though full of exhortations against violence and crime, were at the same time eminently calculated to inflame the passions of the people against England. Most of these speeches consisted of eulogies of the beauty and natural fertility of Ireland, with lines from Moore's Melodies, and much flattery of 'the finest peasantry on earth;' and accompanying this it was the constant object of O'Connell to represent all the poverty and misery of Ireland as due to English tyranny.

One gigantic meeting was held at Mullaghmast, where he recalled with graphic eloquence a tragedy which is said to have taken place there in Tudor days, when the chiefs of the O'Mores had been treacherously massacred by English, or rather Anglo-Irish colonists. He delighted in expatiating on the violation of the treaty of Limerick and on the penal laws till he had worked up the passions of his Catholic hearers to fever point. Above all, he dilated on the iniquity of the Union, the shameful means by which it was accomplished, its effects in destroying the manufactures of Ireland, draining her of her wealth by increased absenteeism and increased taxation. He asked the people to observe how easily the vast, organised, obedient multitudes he had marshalled around him could be turned into an army such as Wellington had never commanded. 'We are eight millions,' he constantly boasted; 'there is another million of Irishmen in England; there are Irishmen not forgetful of their country in the English army. We shall make no rebellion, we wish no civil

war, we shall keep on the ground of the Constitution as long as we are allowed to do so; but if Peel forces on a contest, if he invades the constitutional rights of the Irish people—then *væ victis* between the contending parties. Where is the coward who would not die for such a land as Ireland? Have not Irishmen the ordinary courage of Englishmen? Are they to be treated as slaves? Will they submit to be trampled under foot? Let our enemies attack us if they dare. They shall never trample me under their feet; if they do so it will be my dead body.'

Language of this kind, used by an orator of consummate power addressing vast masses of brave, ignorant, and excited men, could not fail to be in the highest degree dangerous. What O'Connell himself wished is, indeed, tolerably evident. He had certainly no desire to produce a rebellion, and he was confident that through his own marvellous ascendency over the people, seconded by the steady action of the priests, he could keep the movement within the limits of the law. It was his own favourite phrase that 'there is a moral electricity in the continuous expression of public opinion concentrated upon a single point, perfectly irresistible in its efficacy,' and he was producing demonstrations of Irish Catholic opinion on a scale and with a dramatic effect which had never been equalled. But if he did not mean to use force, he at least meant to threaten it, and to reproduce on a gigantic scale that system of organised intimidation which had once before forced the hand of Wellington and Peel—compelled them to stultify their whole past by conceding Catholic Emancipation, because to refuse it would be to plunge Ireland into a civil war, or at least to make it absolutely ungovernable. The evil precedent of 1829 and the earlier precedent of the Irish volunteers were constantly before

his mind, and in public as well as in private he avowed his belief that he must speedily succeed.

The situation, in the eyes of any British statesman, was alarming in the extreme. It could scarcely be doubted that if O'Connell had given the word, and if the priests had supported him, he could have produced a rebellion which would have been far more formidable than that of 1798; and, whatever might have been its ultimate result, it would have deluged Ireland with blood. No one could doubt the martial tastes and aptitudes of the Irish people, and the organisation of the great meetings showed clearly, what all good observers have noticed, that they are a people eminently susceptible of military discipline and singularly capable of acting in great bodies. But, even assuming that O'Connell was inexorably opposed to insurrection, he was now sixty-eight, and men might well ask whether in case of his death the flame of rebellion would not break out, or whether even during his lifetime he could restrain the people. It is quite certain that among the populace the idea that the 'Councillor would soon give the word' was spreading, and that tens of thousands were looking forward to rebellion.

O'Neill Daunt, who was one of O'Connell's most devoted followers, and who, like him, looked upon repeal as likely to be accomplished in the near future, urged that a system of universal military education like that existing in Prussia should be established in Ireland. He found O'Connell absolutely opposed to his idea. All (he said) that in the past was accomplished by military force would henceforth be gained by a purely moral movement. Physical violence would soon become obsolete, and the great bloodless agitation in Ireland was exciting an interest abroad which would greatly accelerate the movement. O'Neill Daunt argued that if re-

peal was granted Ireland might be invaded by foreign enemies. 'And if it should,' answered O'Connell, 'one week would have Ireland drilled for resistance, organised as we are. See the multitudes I had at Tara. How easy it would be to drill them on short notice!'[1] The 'Nation' newspaper, which had been founded in 1843, was rapidly rising in circulation and influence, and it was already becoming evident that the brilliant and enthusiastic group of young men who wrote and managed it were by no means disposed to be absolutely subservient either to O'Connell or to the priests, and that they were beginning to look forward to an armed conflict as at least a possibility, and not altogether an unwelcome one.

The extraordinary spectacle Ireland at this time presented had begun to excite great attention in other countries, and if foreign influences reacted on Ireland they were not likely to be in the direction of peace. Subscriptions had begun to flow in from the United States. An American President had declared his warm sympathy with repeal. In France, Ledru-Rollin wrote to O'Connell a letter, clearly intimating that if war broke out Ireland would not be unassisted by France. O'Connell prudently made no secret of this offer and of his reply, in which he declined to discuss the contingency of the Irish being forced to appeal to arms, as 'it was impossible that it should arise, the British Government having retracted every menace of illegal force and unjust violence.'[2]

Two successive English Governments had to deal with the new repeal agitation. The position of the moribund Melbourne Ministry was singularly difficult

[1] *Recollections*, ii. 178–179.

[2] Duffy's *Young Ireland*, 315–324; O'Neill Daunt's *Recollections*, ii. 167–168.

as it had long been in close alliance with O'Connell, had offered him high legal office, and had mainly depended for its continuance upon the votes of his followers. Lord Althorp, however, had condemned the repeal agitation as strenuously as it had been condemned by Lord Grey; and the Whig Viceroy, Lord Ebrington, publicly announced that no appointment or other favour of the Crown should be conferred on those who encouraged or took part in it. But the chief brunt of the conflict had to be borne by Peel, who came into office in September 1841. During the year that followed his accession Ireland gave him little trouble, and repeal, though not abandoned, seemed almost dormant. Towards the end of 1842 the repeal cry had become louder, but it did not yet appear very alarming. Leigh Hunt compared it, in the 'Examiner,' to the cry of the Darrynane Beagles. 'The fellow,' said O'Connell, 'made a better hit than he intended, for my beagles never cease their cry till they catch their game.' The gigantic meetings in the spring of 1843 at once showed that it had taken genuine hold upon the people, and that great dangers were to be feared. Troops were now poured by thousands into Ireland. The old barracks and martello towers were put into a state of defence; stores were accumulated and all preparations were made for meeting a possible rebellion.

In May the Chancellor, Lord Sugden, wrote a letter dismissing from the magistracy Lord French, who was at this time the one member of the Irish aristocracy who took part in the movement, and declaring his determination to act in the same way in the case of every other magistrate who attended repeal meetings. O'Connell and more than thirty other magistrates were now deprived of the Commission of the Peace. O'Connell at once pledged himself to impeach the Chancellor in

the Irish Parliament which he believed would soon be assembled, for interfering with the subjects' most precious right—that of petitioning Parliament, which had been expressly and solemnly guaranteed by the Revolution settlement, under which the sovereign occupied her throne—and he at the same time ridiculed the statement of the Chancellor that these meetings had 'an inevitable tendency to outrage.' More than twenty monster meetings for the purpose of petitioning for repeal had taken place within the preceding three months, and not a single outrage had been produced.[1]

A stringent Arms Act, modelled after the expiring Whig Act of 1838, but with some additional provisions, was introduced, and in spite of violent opposition from Whigs and Radicals became law. In May Peel declared in Parliament that 'there was no influence, no power, no authority which the prerogatives of the Crown and the existing law give the Government which shall not be exercised for the purpose of maintaining the Union, the dissolution of which would involve not merely the repeal of an Act of Parliament, but the dismemberment of this great Empire,' and he added, 'I am also prepared to make in my place here the declaration which was made, and nobly made, by Lord Althorp, that deprecating as I do war, but above all civil war, yet there is no alternative which I do not think preferable to the dismemberment of this Empire.' He clearly intimated that he would not concede repeal even if the whole representation of Ireland demanded it, and, in a manner which appears to me to have been grossly unconstitutional, he introduced the private opinions of the Queen into the discussion. He read out the reply of the King to the address in 1834, in which the King was made by

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 303–306.

his ministers to say 'I have seen with feelings of deep regret and just indignation the attempt to excite the people of that country [Ireland] to demand a repeal of the Legislative Union. This bond of our national strength and safety I have already declared my fixed and unalterable resolution under the blessing of Divine Providence to maintain inviolate by all the means in my power.' and he then added 'On the part of her Majesty I am authorised to repeat the declaration made by King William.'[1]

Meanwhile the Repeal Association, supported and assisted all over Catholic Ireland by the priesthood, was rapidly becoming the real government of the country. In organising, directing, and stimulating a great popular movement, indeed, O'Connell had now great experience, and it is no exaggeration to say that in these arts he has had no superior, perhaps no rival, in the history of the world. The repeal rent was rapidly rising, and it furnished the movement with ample resources. In the early part of 1842 it is said to have amounted only to some 50*l.* or 60*l.* a week, but it was more than doubled through the exertions of the repeal missionaries at the end of the year, and in the two weeks after the debate in the Corporation it amounted to 259*l.* and 360*l.* The monster meetings rapidly increased it; the week after the dismissal of the magistrates it amounted to no less than 2,205*l.*, and in the course of 1843 to nearly 50,000*l.*[2]

The meeting place of the Repeal Association in Dublin was now far too small for the organisation, and a new building, called significantly 'The Conciliation Hall,' and capable of holding some 5,000 persons, was

[1] Hansard, May 9, 1843.

[2] O'Neill Daunt, *Recollections*, ii. 141, 164. See, too, *Ireland*, by G. G. Porter, p. 29–30.

erected. It was admirably adapted, O'Connell said, to be the temporary home of the Irish Parliament before the old Parliament house was rearranged. A vast correspondence maintained the organisation over nearly every part of Ireland. Repeal wardens in the different parishes regulated the collections, marshalled the local resources, watched over the interests of the people. Repeal libraries were established, where the literature of the movement, and especially the 'Nation,' was eagerly read. There was a repeal police, whose business it was not only to keep order at the meetings, but also to go to every district which was the scene of faction riots or of agrarian crime, and in the name of the Repeal Association to endeavour to allay the disturbance. 'Every man who commits a crime,' was O'Connell's often repeated maxim, 'gives strength to the enemy.' There were repeal arbitration courts which were intended to adjudicate disputes without bringing them before the law courts or before the magistracy, who, after the removal of the repeal magistrates and of some others who had voluntarily thrown up their commissions when these magistrates were removed, were more than ever distrusted.

The whole workmanship was indeed a masterpiece of organisation supported by an orderly and regulated enthusiasm, which made it doubly formidable. In May 1843 Lord De Grey, who was Peel's Viceroy, wrote: 'Matters are looking so serious that delay or temporising will be ruin. The rapid spread of the repeal agitation and the burst of audacity which has broken out within this very short time are astounding. . . . The Roman Catholic hierarchy support repeal. Dr. M'Hale remits subscriptions from nearly every priest in his diocese. America gives increased support to it. This can only be with separation in view. The corporations, fol-

lowing the example of Dublin, have nearly all declared for it. The teetotallers are all repealers. All Ireland is organised by "repeal wardens," sent down, appointed, and paid by the head association.'[1]

O'Connell was also much occupied during the summer of 1843 with a project for assembling a council of 300 men representing the different counties and boroughs of Ireland. This was a direct and manifest violation of the Convention Act, but O'Connell seemed to believe that it was possible for him to evade the statute. The 300 were to be chosen but not formally elected. They were to be men entrusted with the duty of carrying to Dublin sums of not less than 100*l.*, subscribed as repeal rent in their neighbourhood, and they were to be recommended by their neighbours and fellow subscribers as trustworthy men to carry these sums to their destination and discharge all duties connected with them. Three hundred had been the number of the volunteer delegates at Dungannon who gave the first decisive impulse to Irish independence. It was the number of the members of Grattan's Parliament, and O'Connell openly expressed his belief that the new 300 might easily be converted into another Parliament. The scheme, however, does not appear to have met with general acceptance among the repealers, and the legal obstacles to it in the existing state of the law were probably insuperable.[2]

It was evident, however, that the crisis was rapidly approaching. The vast meetings were not only marshalled like great armies—they were often accompanied by bodies of several thousand horsemen, who were now spoken of as Repeal Cavalry, though this

[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, iii. 46.

[2] See a good deal about this proposal in Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*, p. 305, &c.

language does not appear to have been countenanced by O'Connell. Plans of military organisation were openly discussed in the 'Nation.' Troops of British cavalry at the same time hung around the meetings, though no disorder had broken out. The forts and barracks were fully prepared for war. Ships of war were multiplying in the Irish harbours. The declaration of Sir Robert Peel that he would prefer civil war to the concession of repeal was met by O'Connell in terms of unqualified defiance—in language which plainly implied that though he would not initiate rebellion, he was prepared, under certain circumstances, to resort to physical force in self-defence. I have already given specimens of such language, and his speech at Tara was full of it. He did not, he said, disparage the English army; they were the bravest in the world, and he well knew that Wellington was now pouring troops into Ireland; but, when he looked on the vast assembly before him, could he fear them? Roused as Ireland was, she could furnish women enough to beat the whole of the Queen's forces. He referred to a famous episode in the siege of Limerick, when Irishwomen threw themselves between the contending forces and helped to fling back an English attack. He reiterated with great confidence his doctrine that the Queen, by simply issuing writs, could restore the Irish Parliament without the intervention of that at Westminster, and he promised that if she could not get the Irish Chancellor to sign such writs, she would soon get an Irishman who would do so to revive the Irish Parliament. He expressed his firm belief 'that twelve months cannot possibly elapse without having an hurrah for our Parliament in College Green!' He at the same time announced that all the magistrates who had been displaced on account of their adherence to repeal should be appointed by the

Repeal Association to settle the disputes and differences in their neighbourhoods, and he called on all the people to resort to his new Arbitration Courts and not to the petty sessions.[1]

Many interpretations have been put on the language of absolute defiance with which at this time O'Connell responded to the declarations of the two Houses of Parliament in favour of the Union, and to the firm language of the British Government. Some thought that his head had been turned by the extraordinary labours and excitements through which he had been passing, and that in the presence of these vast and enthusiastic multitudes he had lost something of the self-control with which in critical moments he was accustomed to measure his words. Others have believed—and in this, I think, there is much truth—that he underrated the strength of the character of Peel, and imagined that when that statesman found himself on the very brink of civil war he would, as in 1829, recede. Others supposed that at last, and after long hesitation, O'Connell found the forces driving him onward growing irresistible, that he felt himself driven to the alternative of submission or war, and that he was prepared, if need be, to give the word. Senior, who was at that time a great light among the Whigs of the 'Edinburgh Review,' adopted a conclusion which was certainly the most erroneous of all—that O'Connell wished a political revolution to be effected by a great agrarian one. He had stated that fixity of tenure must be one of the consequences of repeal. Fixity of tenure, according to the Whig economist, could only mean legal confiscation, and O'Connell had only to proclaim that by throwing off British rule every farmer would become the

[1] Taylor's *Life of Peel*, iii. 228–232.

absolute owner of his land to make the Irish revolution general.[1]

A juster calculation was that, whether he wished it or not, a collision could not be long averted. 'O'Connell and the priests,' wrote the Chancellor, 'have arrayed the lower orders against the intelligence and property of the country. You can hardly overrate the gravity of the present moment. The peaceable demeanour of the assembled multitudes is one of the most alarming symptoms. . . . A settled conviction prevails among them that repeal will soon be carried, and repeal means what every individual happens to desire. . . . Such vast bodies of men, entertaining such opinions and ready for action, could only be kept down by the influence of O'Connell and the priests. But it is impossible that they can much longer prevent an outbreak. The present fever heat, though it may exhaust the patient and produce a corresponding degree of languor, is more likely to end in violence. I think a short time will decide. . . . Repeal now means separation and hatred to the British connection.'[2]

The difficulties of Sir Robert Peel were of many kinds. Formidable and dangerous as was the repeal organisation, it was difficult to maintain that an organisation which was ostensibly intended only to petition for the repeal of an Act of Parliament was in its nature illegal, and the difficulty was the more serious because the Anti-Cornlaw League which was beginning to be a great power in England was admittedly formed after its model. It was not easy without an appearance of injustice to suppress the one and to leave the other untouched.[3] The complete absence of disorder at the

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[1] Senior, *Journals and Essays on Ireland*, i. 20.
[2] Peel's *Correspondence*, iii. 48, 49. [3] Ibid. p. 47.

monster meetings, while it showed the perfection of the discipline that had been attained under the double influence of O'Connell and Father Mathew, took away the most natural pretext for interfering with them, and O'Connell seldom failed to mingle expressions of the most fervent attachment to the Queen with the most furious denunciations of England and of her ministers. Peel's Irish Government was neither strong nor harmonious. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord de Grey, and Elliot, the Chief Secretary, differed in policy and had little personal sympathy, and the Chancellor, though an excellent lawyer, was tactless and inefficient as a political guide. The debates on the Arms Bill showed that the Opposition in Parliament were not likely to support exceptional legislation suppressing the Repeal Association, and there were powerful working-class bodies in England who had much sympathy with O'Connell.

The result of all this was that, except for the passing of the Arms Act and the declaration of the two Houses in favour of maintaining the Union, nothing had been done when Parliament was prorogued in August to carry out the promise of suppressing the agitation, though the presence of 35,000 troops and the other military measures of precaution that had been taken would probably have been sufficient to crush in a short time rebellion, if it broke out. Wellington appears to have himself desired to assume at this time the government of Ireland, but Peel and Graham, though admitting that his presence would be invaluable if there was a military defection to be checked or an open rebellion to be suppressed, altogether deprecated this course,[1] and were anxious to do nothing to precipitate a conflict. From spring to autumn the monster meet-

[1] Peel's *Correspondence*, iii. 63-64.

ings proceeded in an uninterrupted course. The long days and the fine weather were now drawing to a close, and it was resolved to complete the series by a meeting at Clontarf, which it was thought would be the climax of the whole.

It was to be held on Sunday, October 8, 1843. The place was selected as in the convenient neighbourhood of Dublin, and partly also as being associated with perhaps the most glorious military event in Irish history, for it was the scene of the greatest battle ever fought on Irish soil, when Brian Boru finally shattered the power of the Danes. The meeting had been announced a fortnight before, and there were no signs that Government intended to prohibit it. Vast preparations were made for bringing in gigantic throngs, not only from Dublin and its neighbourhood, but from distant parts of the island, and even from England and Scotland. But a day or two before the appointed meeting, it was noticed that troops were converging from many quarters. Ships of war entered Dublin Bay. The guns of the Pigeon-house were turned towards Clontarf. On Friday evening it was stated in a newspaper that the meeting would be proclaimed, but it was not until the Saturday afternoon that a proclamation forbidding it appeared.

The difficulty of carrying out this prohibition without bloodshed was very great. O'Connell at once ordered that the proclamation should be obeyed. The platforms were removed. All the agencies of the organisation were employed to warn the people against attending the meeting and against every kind of resistance or outrage, and they succeeded. Horsemen were sent long distances from Dublin to intercept and warn the country people who were already trooping in. The day passed without a meeting and without disturbance,

and the vast multitudes acted with perfect order. In no incident of the campaign had the perfection and power of the repeal organisation been so clearly shown.

The Government were severely blamed for having delayed the suppression of the meeting to so late a period that there was imminent danger of a sanguinary collision. If they had given more timely notice another danger would have arisen, for there would have been grave reason to fear some movement of organised and preconcerted opposition. O'Connell acted in the only way which was really reasonable, and in full accordance with his uniform desire to prevent armed collision and bloodshed. To have endeavoured to hold the meeting on ground which was occupied by a great body of troops and commanded by cannon would have only led to useless and hopeless bloodshed, and the firmness, promptness, and skill with which he took his measures, inducing the people to abstain from giving the Government any pretext for violence, can hardly be too highly praised. Yet it is certain that what had taken place was a great shock to his power. The language he had recently been using clearly implied that the monster meetings were, in his judgment, perfectly legal and pacific; that he was determined that they should be held for no other than a constitutional and pacific purpose, and should not be allowed to degenerate into any kind of violence and outrage, but that if they were attacked they would resist and would not suffer themselves to be illegally suppressed. He had challenged Peel and Wellington to interfere with them, and they had done so, and had done so with success. The proclamation that suppressed the Clontarf meeting was, according to O'Connell, absolutely illegal, but it was successful. O'Connell had recoiled before it. The powerful and enthusiastic party which found its mouth-

piece in the 'Nation' were perfectly prepared to take arms if O'Connell would support them, and they deemed his policy a humiliation if not a betrayal, and from this date his ascendency over them was broken. The vast silent masses led by their priests still trusted him with an implicit trust and looked forward to his ultimate triumph, yet they too were dimly conscious that a challenge had been given which had not been accepted, that there had been a rebuff and a defeat.

The Government swiftly followed up their blow, and a prosecution for conspiracy and sedition was at once directed against O'Connell and a number of his colleagues, including Gavan Duffy, the editor of the 'Nation.' They were arrested on October 14, but were at once admitted to bail. The trial did not come on till the beginning of 1844, and it lasted for twenty-five days. The indictment was of portentous length, and no less than eleven counts were submitted to the jury. The monotony of the trial was relieved by much brilliant oratory, by a great deal of very curious cross-examination, and by a strange episode occasioned by the Attorney-General, who sent a challenge to one of the opposing counsel, which that gentleman submitted to the Bench. The two most eloquent speeches delivered were beyond all question those of Sheil and Whiteside. A great number of charges have been brought against this trial which have elicited much controversy. It is sufficient to state the facts that are admitted. An error, which at least one Irish judge believed not to have been unintentional, was made in the panel of the jury, and by this error more than twenty Catholics were excluded from the juror list. Of the Catholics whose names were called all were objected to by the Government prosecutor, and accordingly there was not a single Roman Catholic on the jury which tried the

greatest Catholic of his age in the metropolis of an essentially Catholic country, and at a time when sectarian animosity ran very high. After a charge from the Chief Justice, which Macaulay compared to the displays of judicial partisanship in the State trials of Charles II., O'Connell was found guilty on nearly all the counts of the indictment, but sentence was deferred till the following term.

If we try to sum up in a few words the conclusions that may be derived from the perusal of this long trial, the first point which strikes us is that it produced no facts that were not previously known. It is, I think, evident from it that O'Connell had never seriously designed rebellion; that he had taken no measures whatever to arm the people; that he had entered into no secret conspiracies of any kind. According to his uniform maxim, all his proceedings had been in the light of day and his motives and objects had been candidly avowed. It was at the same time abundantly proved that he had on numerous occasions, in nearly all parts of Ireland and before vast masses of ignorant and excited men, used language of the most inflammatory character about England, constantly dilating upon the treachery, the oppression, the barbarity of her past, and constantly representing her as the tyrant and the arch-enemy of Ireland. Even in exhorting the people to abstain from crime, it was on the ground that it would give strength to the 'enemy,' and the enemy were the English, or, as he usually termed them, the 'Saxons.' That his language was calculated in the highest degree to separate the two nations and to kindle or strengthen anti-English feeling cannot reasonably be questioned, though this language was coupled with expressions of enthusiastic devotion to the Queen, whom he always termed the Queen of Ireland, and with a con-

stant assertion that he had no desire to sever the connection.

The avowed object of the meetings was to protest against the Union and to petition for its repeal, and it was acknowledged by the Crown lawyers that this object was not in itself illegal. They were obliged also to acknowledge that O'Connell was indefatigable in his exhortations to the people to keep strictly within the law, to abstain from all drunkenness, violence, and disorder, to injure nobody, to intimidate nobody. Never, perhaps, in any country had so long a series of such gigantic popular out-of-door meetings been held with such a total absence of disturbance, and no evidence was adduced at the trial to show that they were accompanied by any of that intimidation or boycotting of minorities which characterises more modern movements in Ireland. On the other hand, it was contended by the prosecution that a meeting which in itself was perfectly legal may become illegal if it is made use of for the purpose of exciting hatred and contempt of the Government and the Constitution, or if it forms part of a combination for the purpose of intimidating and overcoming the legislature by vast demonstrations of physical force, and thus procuring changes in law and government. That this was the object of O'Connell could hardly be denied. These vast organised demonstrations were not merely demonstrations of public opinion. They were, and they were intended to be, demonstrations of physical force on a gigantic scale, and in speech after speech O'Connell had dilated upon the facility with which the multitudes before him could be converted into armies of overwhelming strength. He was pursuing, it was said, a legal end by illegal means, and by raising the fiercest passions against England and organising millions of men into great political

bodies he sought to force through a measure which Parliament and the electors had repudiated. And he pretended that it was possible to effect this without any appeal to the legislature in London.

He was accused also of an organised attempt to bring the law courts and the administration of justice into contempt and disrepute by inducing the people to withdraw the adjudication of their disputes from the established tribunals and to place them in the hands of courts of his own creation. It could not reasonably be contended that it was illegal for O'Connell to exhort his people to follow the examples of the Quakers and abstain from the law courts; it was difficult to contend that the establishment of voluntary arbitration courts, with no legal sanction, for the purpose of settling disputes was in itself illegal, and the extent to which this system was carried out throughout Ireland is a wonderful example of his power. But this was done, in his own words, with the object of 'taking all power out of the hands of the Government, as regarded the courts of law.' To institute and appoint in the several districts of Ireland new courts for the express purpose of superseding the ordinary tribunals, and to place ostentatiously at the head of many of them former magistrates who had just been removed by the Crown from the commission of the peace was, it was said, an usurpation of the royal prerogative and constituted a criminal offence.

Into the legal questions involved in these charges it is not necessary for me to enter, nor yet into the propriety of making O'Connell and several other men, including a number of newspaper writers, jointly responsible for deeds and words most of which certainly did not spring from common consultation. The many issues that were brought before the jury, though vary-

ing slightly in their phraseology to meet legal difficulties, may all be substantially reduced to the points I have mentioned, and the true question in judging the trial is whether these things constituted legal offences. The verdict of the Irish Court was overthrown on appeal by the House of Lords, but it cannot be said that the decision carried with it great weight. The English judges were consulted on all the circumstances of the trial, and the majority, while admitting that there had been several irregularities in it, upheld the verdict of the Irish Court. Of the law lords who finally decided the case, the three who were political opponents of the Government voted one way, while Brougham, who was now bitterly exasperated with the Whigs, and Lyndhurst, who was one of the great leaders of the Tories, voted the other, and the appeal was ultimately decided not on the broad merits of the case, but on legal grounds of the most technical kind.

The verdict against O'Connell in the Irish trial was given on February 12, 1844; but, as the sentence was deferred till the next term, O'Connell remained at large upon bail for some months. He went to London, appeared in Parliament, and took part in a long debate on the state of Ireland. Grenville mentions that 'he spoke well, temperately, becomingly, was well received, and made a favourable impression.' There was evidently a strong party in England in his favour, and a very decided feeling that his trial had been an unfair one. The manner in which the jury panel had been tampered with; the exclusion of all Catholics from the jury box; the extreme complexity and, at the same time, the dangerous vagueness and comprehensiveness of the indictment, and the manifest partisanship of the presiding judge, were all topics brought forward in Parliament by the Whig Opposition. Lord John Rus-

sell, who led the Whig party, and Sir Thomas Wilde, who held a first place among the Whig lawyers in Parliament, strongly condemned the trial. O'Connell was received with enthusiastic applause at a meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League in Covent Garden. He attended great Radical meetings at Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Coventry, and a public dinner was given to him in Covent Garden Theatre.

On May 30 the deferred sentence was pronounced, and O'Connell was condemned to a year's imprisonment and a fine of 2,000*l.*, and was required to give security to the amount of 5,000*l.* for his good behaviour for seven years. Preparations were at once made for an appeal to the House of Lords.

His greatest anxiety at this time was that no breach of the peace should take place. Immediately after the verdict had been given he proposed, to the great indignation of the Young Ireland party, that the Repeal Association should be dissolved and reconstructed on a new basis, excluding all proprietors of newspapers, so that the leaders of the new body could never again be made responsible for press writings over which they had no real control. In consequence of the opposition he met with, O'Connell abandoned his proposal for dissolving the association, and also a proposal for giving up the arbitration courts. These courts, however, were now formally separated from the Repeal Association. The newspaper editors resigned their membership, and the military cards, which had given so much offence, were abandoned. O'Connell issued a manifesto, urging the people not to assemble in crowds or processions at the time of his sentence, and wrote urgently to the Catholic bishops, begging them in each diocese to take the strongest measures to keep the peace.

These efforts were successful, and no disturbance whatever followed his arrest, though there was abundant evidence of the genuine and increasing enthusiasm with which O'Connell was sustained. The repeal rent in the fourteen weeks preceding his imprisonment had amounted to 6,679*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* In the fourteen weeks after O'Connell was in gaol it rose to 25,712*l.* 17*s.* 2*d.*[1] Several important persons—among others Smith O'Brien—who had hitherto held aloof from the Repeal Association now formally joined it, and deputations, headed by the mayors, flowed into Dublin from most of the Irish towns. Gifts of all kinds poured in, and in nearly all the Catholic churches throughout Ireland prayers were offered up for the 'Liberator.' Among the addresses which he received was one which must have been peculiarly gratifying to him from the English Catholics, and signed by nearly all the peers, headed by his old adversary, Lord Shrewsbury. It declared that his whole life had been spent in the cause of his country and the advancement of civil and religious liberty, and it congratulated him that in the time of his imprisonment his 'precepts of order and peace were scrupulously attended to.'[2]

His imprisonment in Richmond gaol pending the appeal to the House of Lords was of the lightest kind. The prisoners were allowed to live together, to see, with scarcely a limitation, their relatives and friends, and for a time even to receive deputations. They were given full liberty to pursue their literary and journalistic work. The houses of the governor and deputy-governor were placed at their disposal. They were treated more like honoured guests than prisoners. They gave almost daily dinner parties, and the Catho-

[1] O'Neill Daunt, *Ireland and her Agitators*, p. 212.
[2] Cusack's *Life of O'Connell*, p. 731.

lic bishops vied with each other for the honour of celebrating the daily mass. On September 24 the appeal to the House of Lords was heard.

On occasions of this kind, when the House sits to review the decisions of the law courts, it is customary to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the law lords, and the permanent maintenance of the judicial authority of the House obviously depends upon the observance of this custom; but there have been instances in which lay lords have taken part in the decision.[1] O'Connell had always been the bitter enemy of the House of Lords. He had inveighed against it in the grossest terms, and had given some of its members cause for the deepest personal animosity. When the appeal was to be heard, a number of lay lords came down to the House to vote against him. The five law lords, who were present, first delivered their opinions —Lyndhurst and Brougham confirming the sentence of the Irish Court, Cottenham, Campbell, and Denman condemning it. Lord Denman, in the course of his judgment, stigmatised the proceedings in Ireland in the strongest language. When the law lords had delivered their judgment, Lord Wharncliffe rose and appealed to the other members of the House not to permit their personal or political feelings to influence a judicial sentence. The appeal struck the right chord. The high and honourable feeling that has almost always characterised the House of Lords reasserted its sway. Every lay lord left the House, and their bitterest living enemy was freed by their forbearance.

This event was entirely unexpected. From the time when the English judges had decided by a majority of seven to two in favour of the Irish verdict the prisoners had given up all hope of a reversal. O'Connell in sol-

[1] *E.g.* in the famous Douglas case in 1769.

emn tones pronounced it to be an answer to the prayers in the Catholic churches, and all through Ireland the news was received with almost a delirium of enthusiasm. A triumphal car, driven by six horses and escorted by a vast multitude, brought O'Connell from the prison to his house in Merrion Square, and the cheers redoubled as they passed the old Parliament house of Ireland, to which O'Connell pointed with a significant gesture. Even in the remotest districts of Ireland the blaze of countless bonfires attested the unbounded, unexampled popularity he enjoyed.

He had, of course, at once to address the multitude and afterwards the Repeal Association, and he did so in his usual strain of mob oratory. There was much abuse of Peel—censure of the injustice and partisanship of his trial, a sarcastic notice of that 'indescribable wretch Brougham,' and a threat that he would do his utmost to bring about the impeachment of the Irish judges and of the ministers. It was remarked, however, by close observers that the note of exultation was very chastened, and that the note of defiance was scarcely present. There was no programme of future agitation, no promise of a revival of the monster meetings, and the passage on which he dwelt the most, and to which he evidently attached most importance, was an earnest and solemn denunciation of the employment of physical force. He was, he said, 'the first apostle and founder of that sect of politicians whose cardinal doctrine is this: that the greatest and most desirable of political changes may be achieved by moral means alone, and that no human revolution is worth the effusion of one single drop of human blood. Human blood is no cement for the temple of human liberty.' [1]

[1] Compare Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*, pp. 533–538, and O'Neill Daunt, *Ireland and her Agitators*, p. 218.

PART III

O'CONNELL'S LAST DAYS

In the eyes of the unthinking multitude, O'Connell had never appeared so great, so triumphant, so eminently the representative of Catholic Ireland as at this time, but in truth the period of his decadence had set in, and he himself was not unconscious of the fact. As soon as possible after his release from prison he escaped from his admirers to the Atlantic air and his beloved beagles at Darrynane, and it speedily became evident to his intimate friends that he was a changed man. The gigantic physical as well as mental strain of the long series of monster meetings; the excitement of the protracted trial; the anxiety which for a time deeply preyed upon him lest the people during his enforced absence should burst into rebellion; the interruption of his usual active habits during more than three months' imprisonment; the violent alternations of despondency and exultation through which he had lately passed were too much for a man who was now verging on seventy. He had suddenly aged. His wonderful voice, overstrained by excessive exertion, had lost its old power. His handwriting had grown tremulous. His step was feeble and uncertain. He retained his old clearness of judgment, something of his old ambition, and all his old love of power; but his nerve was shaken, his energy was abated. The consciousness of failure was upon him. He had seldom been averse to compromise, and while a more ardent

and violent spirit was rising among the younger and most brilliant of his disciples, his own disposition was growing more pacific.

A scheme known as Federalism was, in 1844, occupying a great deal of attention in Irish circles. The impossibilities of Grattan's Constitution in a democratic state had come home to many minds, and a scheme for retaining the Irish representation for Imperial purposes in the Imperial Parliament, and at the same time establishing a subordinate and restricted Parliament in Ireland for exclusively Irish purposes, found several advocates in very different camps. Maunsell, who was perhaps the ablest Tory journalist in Ireland, had started the notion that some compromise with the repealers might be effected, and he proposed in the Dublin Corporation that an address should be presented to the Queen praying her to hold her Court and Parliament in Dublin once in every three years. The scheme though much discussed was not widely accepted, but the desire for compromise which it evinced was manifestly spreading. It was contended that though a Grattan Parliament was an impossibility, a local and subordinate Parliament might be made to work, and the Federal idea was espoused among others by Sharman Crawford, one of the most respected Irish members of Parliament; by Porter, a very important and representative gentleman in the North of Ireland,[1] who wrote a pamphlet on the subject; by Davis, one of the most brilliant writers in the 'Nation;' by Thomas O'Hagan, who became in after years Lord Chancellor of Ireland; and by at least one of the Catholic bishops. It was especially popular among the Protestant repealers, and in 1843 O'Connell had insisted that Feder-

[1] See *Croker Papers*, iii. 21.

alists should be admitted into the Repeal Association. Partly through a desire to conciliate the Protestants and widen the basis of the repeal movement; partly through a belief that if a local Parliament were once conceded it would become a powerful agent in securing complete legislative independence; and partly also through a notion that the English Whigs would not be wholly adverse to a local and restricted Parliament, his own judgment began to incline towards Federalism.

There is some reason to believe that a plan of this kind had long floated in his mind. Lord Campbell mentions that as early as 1833 O'Connell acknowledged to him in a private conversation that he was working on the idea of a subordinate Parliament like that of Jamaica; but Campbell added that if such a Parliament were conceded to Ireland he had no doubt that O'Connell would at once declare it independent and supreme.[1] In the repeal debate in the Dublin Corporation in 1843, there was a remarkable passage in which he dilated upon the benefits which had been attained by the dependent Parliament of Canada, and declared his readiness, under certain circumstances, to accept a dependent Parliament. 'I know,' he said, 'what relief it will give to quiet men of every party. . . . I never said it before, but I am always for taking an instalment when I cannot get the whole, and I will take that. If it should work well for the country I will ask no more; but if it should work ill I cannot bind my countrymen or prevent them from seeking for more. I would never, however, consent to a foreign legal appeal or in the judicial authority not being final; that is a principle I would hold inviolate, but a Parliament inferior to the English Parliament I would accept as an instal-

[1] *Life of Lord Campbell*, ii. 34.

ment, if I found the people ready to go with me, and if it were offered me by competent authority. It must first be offered me—mark that—I will never seek it. By this declaration I am bound thus far, that if the period should come when I am called upon practically to act upon it, I will do so; but I will not give up my exertions for the independent legislation until from some substantial quarter that offer is made. I know I may risk something of popularity by making this statement, but the citizens of Dublin have seen already that I can encounter unpopularity, aye, and personal danger without apprehension when I think myself right in principle. Upon this subject I must not be mistaken. I never will ask for or look for any other save an independent legislature, but if others offer me a subordinate Parliament I will close with any such authorised offer and accept that offer.' [1]

In October 1844, however, O'Connell went much further than this, and startled and divided the repeal party by a letter in which he expressed, though with some ambiguities and qualifications of language, his opinion that the Federation system was preferable to the simple repeal for which he had hitherto contended. It would, he said, 'tend more to the utility of Ireland and the maintenance of the connection with England than the proposal of simple repeal.'

This letter produced much consternation in the repeal camp. In the preceding year O'Connell had formally pledged himself that twelve months would not elapse before an independent Irish Parliament was sitting in College Green, and at the time when he entered into Richmond gaol he had predicted that repeal would come in six months if the people would remain peace-

[1] *Repeal Discussion*, p. 191–192.

ful. He now was avowedly abandoning the active repeal movement, and doing so because he preferred a scheme which was essentially different from that to which he had devoted so many years of his agitation. Some of his most devoted followers, including O'Neill Daunt, openly denounced Federalism. The 'Nation' turned strenuously against it, and it soon became manifest that it was not likely to bring any considerable Protestant accession to the repeal ranks, while the great Catholic masses took no interest in it, and, indeed, scarcely understood it. O'Connell was profoundly disappointed. He wrote from Darrynane, urging that the subject should not be mentioned in the Repeal Association till he arrived in Dublin, and when he did arrive his irritation at the public opposition to his scheme was very manifest. To the inquiry of O'Neill Daunt after his health, he replied that he was as well as a man could be who was opposed by one-half of his friends and deserted by the other half; but he saw clearly that his only course was to retreat. 'I was deceived,' he said; 'I got promises that we should have a valuable Whig accession.' As was usual with him, he did not hesitate long. He went down to the association and openly recanted Federalism. Snapping his fingers, he exclaimed, 'Federalism is not worth that!'[1]

This episode threw back considerably the repeal agitation, and nothing was done to push on the advantage which the legal condemnation of the trial in Dublin had given to the repealers. The idle, foolish, and probably entirely insincere proposal of impeaching the lawyers and ministers connected with the trial was speedily abandoned. Peel, in the meantime, was gov-

[1] Compare O'Neill Daunt, *Personal Recollections*, ii. 214–222; Duffy's *Young Ireland*, pp. 575–605.

erning the country firmly, but also in a very conciliatory spirit. His private letters clearly show his desire to make every concession to the Roman Catholics that was compatible with the two great objects of maintaining the Union and the Established Church. Lord Heytesbury came over as Viceroy in the place of Lord de Grey, and he had instructions to do as much as he could to favour Roman Catholics in matters of patronage, and especially to give them increased confidence in the administration of justice by placing Catholics on the Bench and in other posts of dignity and power. A commission with large powers, presided over by Lord Devon, was established for the purpose of making a full and exhaustive inquiry into the condition of the Irish people who were engaged in agriculture, into the relations of landlord and tenant, and all the other agrarian questions which lay at the root of the poverty of the people. Great and not wholly unsuccessful efforts were made to conciliate the more moderate section of the priesthood. A 'Charitable Trust Act' giving increased protection to bequests for Catholic purposes was introduced and carried, and in spite of the strenuous opposition of O'Connell and of Archbishop MacHale, three members of the Catholic episcopacy consented to serve on the board. Archbishop Murray, by appearing at the levee of Lord Heytesbury, marked his dissent from the violent enmity to the Peel Administration which O'Connell preached, and as a result of some informal negotiations at Rome a rescript was sent from the Vatican cautioning the priests against taking any prominent part in Irish politics.

Two measures of great importance speedily followed. The College of Maynooth, which had been set up by the Irish Parliament in 1795 for the education of the priesthood, had hitherto only a very inadequate endow-

ment varying from about 8,000*l.* to 9,000*l.*, which was voted annually and constantly opposed. Peel determined largely to increase it and to place it on a permanent basis. No small courage was needed to carry out such a policy, for it was certain to encounter passionate and persistent opposition from the extreme Protestant party, both in Great Britain and Ireland. It was denounced from many pulpits as a national sin; it was certainly unpopular with the great masses both of the English and Scotch people, and it led to the secession of Gladstone from the Cabinet. In spite, however, of all obstacles Peel persevered. The endowment of Maynooth was raised to 26,000*l.* a year, and an additional sum of 30,000*l.* was granted for its buildings. The whole management of the college and of its endowments was left exclusively in the hands of the Catholic bishops, and Maynooth has gradually become the chief seminary for the education of the priesthood, not only for Ireland but for the colonies.

Probably few persons will contend that it has succeeded in rendering them loyal to England and to the Crown, or even in greatly raising their level of culture and intelligence, but the measure of Peel was just, courageous, and generous, and it reflects high honour on his administration. O'Connell could not help supporting it, but he did so in the most grudging manner, attributing it wholly to the pressure produced by his agitation.[1] His detestation of Peel, indeed, never abated, and few men carried into party warfare a more unscrupulous spirit.

The other great measure of 1845 was the establishment of the Queen's colleges, soon followed by the Queen's University, to which they were affiliated. It

[1] See Walpole's *History of England*, iv. 251.

was intended to secure the higher education of all denominations of Irishmen on the basis of complete equality. Trinity College had long thrown open its degrees to Roman Catholics, but its fellowships and scholarships were still restricted to members of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and although a large number of Catholics of the upper classes had profited by its teaching, it had hardly touched the great body of the Catholic middle classes. By planting the new colleges in Belfast, Cork, and Galway, Sir Robert Peel appealed at once to the Presbyterians and to the Catholics, and his measure was conceived in the largest and most tolerant spirit. Ample provision was made for the best secular education that could be afforded, and although it was determined that no chairs of theology should be founded or endowed by the Government, private persons were not only permitted but invited to establish such chairs for the religious instruction of the members of each denomination within the walls of the colleges, and by chaplains appointed by their own ecclesiastical authorities.

It was proposed that denominational residential halls should be established by voluntary subscription, in which the Catholic students who desired it might live together under the direct supervision of their clergy; Deans of Residence were to be appointed by the different denominations; Catholic bishops were offered seats in the Senate and on the Visitorial Board; every professor was bound by a solemn engagement to abstain on penalty of dismissal from interfering in any way with the religious opinions of his pupils, and it was provided in the statutes that regulations might be made for the attendance of the students at such divine worship as might be approved of by their parents or guardians. The Government, following the course of

nearly all modern continental States, refused to place the control of secular education in ecclesiastical hands, and kept the appointment and dismissal of the professors in its own power; but it consented to establish a board on which the various religions were represented, and on which Archbishop Murray was invited to sit, for the purpose of selecting and recommending them. A Catholic priest was placed at the head of the college of Galway, and a very eminent Catholic layman at the head of that of Cork. In the words of Sir R. Peel: 'The principle of equality is preserved in the new institutions. We have given the Catholics every facility for religious instruction. We have given them direct sanction and encouragement. We have admitted that secular instruction will be imperfect unless accompanied by religious instruction as its basis; but we have thought (it may be erroneously) that the best way of providing that religious instruction where there is so much jealousy of interference was to give every facility, but to call on parents . . . . to provide the means and to call on the respective Churches to give their aid in providing that education.'

Few greater boons have ever been granted to the Irish people, and, judged by all the tests that would be accepted on the Continent, it provided the most ample guarantees for their religious faith. It was intended to do for the upper and middle classes of Catholics what the national education had done for the poor. A large number of the Irish Catholics recognised in it the fulfilment of a great national want, and urged their people to accept it. Sir T. Wyse had much to say in suggesting the scheme.[1] The chief writers in the

[1] See a valuable pamphlet called "Notes on Educational Reform in Ireland in the First Half of the 19th Century" from the *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Wyse*, by his Niece (1901).

'Nation' supported it, and several of the more moderate Irish Catholic bishops, including Murray, the Archbishop of Dublin, and Crolly, the Archbishop of Armagh, were prepared to accept it and to do their best to carry it into effect.[1] Unfortunately it had to encounter from different quarters the combined force of intense bigotry and unscrupulous party spirit. A section of the English Conservatives still held that all State-endowed education must be religious and in the hands of the Established Church, and they denounced the new colleges as 'godless education.'

The phrase was that of Sir Robert Inglis, but it was at once taken up by O'Connell and echoed by a multitude of Catholic leaders. Archbishop MacHale, who had done his best to strangle the national education for the poor, was foremost in his denunciation. The majority of the bishops, in the true spirit of the false mother in Solomon's judgment, were determined that no system of higher education should flourish in Ireland unless it was entirely in their hands, and they asserted their right of appointing and dismissing the professors in all branches of secular learning. They declared that Roman Catholic pupils could not attend the lectures on history, logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, geology, or anatomy without exposing their faith and morals to imminent danger, unless a Roman Catholic professor was appointed to each of those chairs. Archbishop MacHale described the foundation of the new colleges as 'a penal and revolting measure,' an attempt 'to bribe Catholic youths into an abandonment of their religion . . . . seconding the scheme of mercenary infidels.' Dr. Derry, Bishop of Clonfert, refused the Sacrament to parents who sent their sons to them, pro-

[1] Cardinal Wiseman also approved of it. Fitzpatrick, ii. 360.

nouncing their establishment to be a 'conspiracy that has been organised to withdraw the education of youths from the influence of the Catholic Church,' a 'Satanic scheme for the ruin of faith in the rising generation.' O'Connell's son, doubtless with his father's approbation, spoke of it, at its very starting, as 'an abominable attempt to undermine religion and morality in Ireland.' O'Connell himself urged the bishops to give no encouragement to the building of denominational halls for the residence of Catholics, on the ground that the Protestants were richer than the Catholics, and would accordingly build more halls, and to accept no scheme without a provision giving them a decisive voice in the appointment and dismissal of professors.[1]

The later history of the antagonism of the Church to the colleges does not fall within the scope of this work, for O'Connell was in his grave before it came to its culmination. Ultramontane influences were acquiring at Rome an ever-increasing strength and aggressiveness, and Archbishop MacHale himself went over to Rome to procure a condemnation of the colleges. His policy triumphed. In 1847 and 1848 rescripts came over from Rome describing them as involving 'a grave danger to the faith of Catholics,' as 'dangerous to faith and morals,' and urging the bishops to erect a Catholic university of their own 'on the model of that which has been founded in Louvain by the prelates of Belgium.' The death of Archbishop Crolly, and soon after of Archbishop Murray; the appointment to the Primacy of Ireland of Cardinal Cullen, who represented

[1] A great deal of information on the early history of Queen's colleges will be found in the evidence of Dr. Starkie before the Commission of University Education in Ireland (1902), *Appendix to the Second Report*. See, too, Cairne's *Political Essays*, pp. 256–322. Bourke's *Life and Times of Archbishop MacHale*. Fitzpatrick, ii. 357–359.

the most extreme type of an Ultramontane priest; and finally the violent antagonisms produced by the papal aggression on the one hand, and by the Durham letter of Lord J. Russell on the other, assisted the obscurantist crusade. In 1850 the Synod of Thurles condemned the colleges, and in 1851 they were again solemnly condemned from Rome. All Catholics were warned against them, and Catholic priests were prohibited, under canonical censure, from taking any part in their administration.

The college founded by Sir Robert Peel at Belfast, being attended chiefly by Presbyterians, has proved a great success, and the two Catholic colleges of Cork and Galway have, in the course of half a century, given an excellent education to a large number of Catholics, and so far as their influence has extended it has been wholly for good. Educated Catholic opinion in Ireland has been at least sufficiently powerful to prevent the Church from absolutely prohibiting their people from attending these colleges, though they can attend them only in spite of its discouragement and warnings, and though the machinery which Peel had designed for securing their religious instruction has been paralysed by the refusal of the priests to take part in it. But, on the whole, the colleges of Cork and Galway, which ought to have been great centres of Catholic enlightenment, have failed to fulfil their promise. Education, and especially that united education which best assuages the animosities of race, class and religions, is of all things what is most needed in Ireland, but it has had to combat the influence of a priesthood who care far more for influence than for education, and who especially seek to separate their own people from Protestants.

More than half a century after the establishment of the Queen's University, and thirty years after the abo-

lition of every vestige of religious disqualification in Trinity College, university education among the Irish Catholics remains deplorably backward. Statesmen of the most opposite views have stated as among the chief practical difficulties of Irish government the difficulty of finding competent Catholics to fill the more important posts; the certainty that if these appointments were made by merit alone, the great majority would be given to the Protestant minority; the constant necessity of sacrificing competence and efficiency for the purpose of preserving a balance of creeds. That great and salutary movement which all over the civilised world has withdrawn the secular education of State-endowed universities from ecclesiastical control has found little or no sympathy in Catholic Ireland, which remains beyond all other countries in this respect priest-ridden.

O'Connell is largely responsible for this, and in this respect it is difficult to exaggerate the evil he has done. Party spirit which led him to depreciate or resist every measure which emanated from Sir R. Peel, no doubt played some part in his opposition, but it would not, I think, be just to attribute it wholly or even mainly to this. All through his life he consistently held the opinion, which was shared also by a considerable portion of the Protestant world, that education in all its parts should be wholly under Ecclesiastical influence. The education of Catholics he maintained should be exclusively committed to Catholic authority. On one condition, but on one only, did he see no objection to Protestants being admitted to the classes—that all the professors were nominated by the canonical authorities of the Catholic Church.[1] He said that he asked noth-

[1] See an interesting letter written to Archbishop MacHale in Cusack's *Life of O'Connell*, p. 742. See, too, her *Speeches and Letters of O'Connell*, ii. 290.

ing for his people which he was not prepared to give to others, and that he would support a purely Presbyterian college in Belfast provided the Catholic priesthood were given a dominating influence in the appointment and dismissal of the professors of the Catholic colleges. His feeling on this subject strengthened in the last years of his life, when ill-health began visibly to weaken his powers. With a devout Catholic strong religious feeling nearly always leads to complete subservience to clerical influence, and Smith O'Brien, who was at this time in close and confidential relations with O'Connell, has observed how in the two or three last years of his life religious considerations had come to predominate completely in his mind. 'I have more than once,' he writes, 'heard him express a desire to enter into some religious establishment, and I have no doubt that he would have done so if he could have extricated himself from the exigencies of his position as a political leader.' [1]

For the rest, the short remainder of O'Connell's life presents little that is remarkable, and the most prominent feature is his quarrel with the Young Ireland party and with their organ, the 'Nation.' The story has been told with great fulness and knowledge by Sir Gavan Duffy, one of the most distinguished members, as well as one of the last survivors of the Young Ireland party. It is very much the old familiar tale of a great leader who finds in the decline of life a younger generation of his disciples breaking away from his influence, developing lines of thought and policy with which he is unable to sympathise; claiming for themselves a share of power which he does not readily concede.

[1] Letter to O'Neill Daunt, *O'Neill Daunt's Life*, edited by his daughter, p. 65.

The group of young men who, under the editorship of Gavan Duffy, conducted the 'Nation,' were men who in any country and in any time would have made their mark, though none of them had that rare combination of gifts which makes O'Connell an almost unique figure in history. They had not his commanding and many-sided power, his wonderful magnetic influence over the great masses of his countrymen, his infinite variety of resource, his strange union of the coarser qualities of a successful demagogue with the acuteness of a consummate lawyer, and with a foresight, a spirit of compromise and a practical genius that might have given him a high place among statesmen.

The Young Ireland party, however, raised Irish journalism to a level of ability which it had never before approached, and it is but just to them to say that the great majority were men of pure motives and ardent and self-sacrificing patriotism, and that they steadily preached the gospel of self-reliance, industry, earnestness, truthfulness, and independence of judgment in a country in which these things were pre-eminently wanting. They were in a high degree seditious. They kindled and fostered a bitter animosity against a country from which Ireland can never be dissevered, and against an Empire which their countrymen had done much to build, and in which they must always find the best fields for their ambition. They never realised, what Scotland might have shown them, that the best elements of distinct nationality could exist and flourish under the British flag; but in their home policy they were unflinching advocates of tolerance, and it was their earnest desire to blend the various creeds in a single nationality; to infuse stronger and nobler elements into the Irish character, and to enlarge the range of Irish intellect. In literary ability—most certainly

in literary taste—several of them were superior to O'Connell, and they sought inspiration in quarters with which he had no sympathy. Even apart from journalism their contributions to Irish history, archæology, and imaginative literature were very considerable. Davis, Mangan, Ferguson, and McCarthy, though not great, were all of them true poets. The historical ballads of Duffy had a fire and a strength which no similar compositions in Ireland had shown, and the singularly fine lyric in which Ingram has glorified the rebels of '98 is probably destined to hold a permanent place in English poetry.

It is curious to observe that Carlyle, who detested and despised O'Connell, and who had certainly no great admiration for Irish character or aspirations, found among the Young Irelanders some of his earliest and most enthusiastic disciples. More than any other writer of his age he appealed to the moral enthusiasm of the younger generation of his contemporaries, and at a time when he was very little appreciated in England his works were eagerly read and discussed in Young Ireland circles. With two conspicuous members of the party he formed a personal friendship, and to the end of his life he spoke of them with sincere respect, though with the pity which was due to genuine talent essentially wasted or perverted. Duffy had been his companion during his tour in Ireland, and he long after wrote one of the best accounts of Carlyle's conversation and personality. One of the last nights Carlyle spent in Ireland was under the roof of John Mitchel, and it was characteristic of Mitchel that when he first visited London the only thing he cared to see was Carlyle in his Chelsea home. The influence of the great Scotch teacher may, indeed, be most plainly seen in the admirable prose of the Irish rebel. In Carlyle's

journal there is this characteristic though not, I think, wholly just passage:—'Both Duffy and Mitchel I have always regarded as specimens of the best kind of Irish youth, seduced like thousands of them in their early day into courses that were at once mad and ridiculous, and which nearly ruined the life of both, by the big Beggarman who had 15,000*l.* a year and *pro pudor!* the favour of English ministers instead of the pillory from them, for professing blarney with such and still worse results.'[1]

Mangan—a man of true genius whose wretched life was a prolonged struggle with poverty and drink, and who was only in a very small degree a politician, was deeply imbued with German literature and produced admirable translations from German writers. Foreign, and especially French sympathies, were cultivated, and foreign currents of thought, which were by no means purely Catholic, were carefully studied. The doctrine of nationalities, which based all rightful political power on the consent of the majority, and which regarded each nation as a distinct entity with an indefeasible right to separate government, was now playing an important part in continental politics, and it lay at the root of the revolutionary movement which convulsed Europe in 1848. It seemed to harmonize well with the Irish repeal agitation, but as an abstract doctrine it was not favoured by the Church, and Davis, who preached it most powerfully, has declared that in Ireland it was not of Catholic origin, but first sprang up in the young men's debating societies of Trinity College.[2] The 'Nation' enthusiastically supported it, and great efforts were made to revive or strengthen everything distinc-

[1] Froude's *Carlyle*, i. 399.

[2] See a remarkable paper of Davis, in Gavan Duffy's *Young Ireland*, p. 527.

tive in Irish nationality. The old names which had been anglicised or forgotten were restored. Irish history, traditions, and antiquities were much studied. The historical associations connected with different localities were collected, and Davis ardently threw himself into a movement for teaching and diffusing the Irish language.

It was truly said that up to this time whatever could be called literature in Ireland belonged almost exclusively to the Tories. Moore, indeed, was a great exception, but most literary talent towards the middle of the century was connected with the 'Dublin University Magazine,' which had attained a very high place in periodical literature. Lever, Carleton, Lefanu, Ferguson, Isaac Butt, William Wilde, and two remarkable brothers, Samuel and Mortimer O'Sullivan, were its leading contributors. It was imbued throughout with a strongly accentuated Toryism, and although it would be unfair to assert that all its contributors fully shared its politics, there seems little doubt that nearly all were in general sympathy with them. In truth, those who will carefully study Irish history and character during the nineteenth century can hardly fail to remark that the proportion of the best intellect which took the Tory side in politics was much larger in Ireland than in England. This was not, I think, mainly due to selfish interests connected with the Protestant ascendency, nor was it at all confined to active or professional politicians. It is equally true of able and discriminating men of both creeds who were engaged in literature, or in other lines of life unconnected with politics, and who formed their judgments with perfect independence and impartiality.

The explanation can, I think, be easily discovered. In the present generation party principles have been so

blended and confused that few generalisations can be drawn; but the Whigs of 1832 and the Liberals of the Manchester school had very distinct political doctrines. These doctrines were eminently fitted for the conditions of English life, and have, in my own judgment, contributed largely to the progress and prosperity of the nation; but it was the weak point of their earlier advocates that they were accustomed to assume that the institutions and the policies that were most suited to England in their own time were also the best for all other countries. Their political millennium was a universal diffusion of the British Constitution either on a middle class or a more democratic basis; of the British system of trial by jury and a free press; of the British maxims of free trade. In Ireland men of real ability soon came to see that these things worked far otherwise than in England. They perceived that the area of self-governing power was much narrower; that there were elements in the country which vitiated profoundly the action of popular institutions; that an administration of the law which was in one country admirably fitted to protect life, liberty, and property, to secure the innocent and punish the guilty, often led in the other to the most scandalous travesties of justice; that free trade and unlimited competition and non-intervention of Government were very far from having the same effects on both sides of the Channel; that both the economical condition of their country and the character and tendencies of its people required a wholly different amount of State assistance, restraint and initiative. Hence a strong tendency among able Irishmen to oppose, or at least to distrust, the currents of liberal thought that were dominating in English politics.

The Nationalist movement, however, created a gen-

uine intellectual enthusiasm which was altogether distinct from both Whiggism and Toryism, and which was at the same time so powerful that it attracted men from all sides, including some of the writers of the 'University Magazine.' When the poetry of the 'Nation' was collected into a volume it is said to have had a larger circulation than any book that had appeared in Ireland since the Union, and it acquired a deep and lasting hold over the imaginations of the people. The old doggerel rhymes; the fantastic prophecies, the tales of legendary highwaymen or dubious martyrs which had once been the popular reading of the people were largely replaced by the tales and ballads of the 'Nation,' and by a crowd of little books on Irish history or biography which issued from the marvellously prolific pens of the young writers. Many of them were too much saturated and discoloured by anti-English animosity to have much enduring value, but they often showed real research and literary skill, and they were sold by tens of thousands. It was observed, indeed, that in the literary criticism of the 'Nation' itself the sense of literature often dominated over political bias, and, much to the displeasure of O'Connell, praise and blame were sometimes awarded very independently of the politics of the writer who was under review.

O'Connell had not much purely literary taste, and, like most practical politicians, he had much distrust of literary politics and politicians and of large and cosmopolitan principles. He defended his own agitations on distinctively Irish or Catholic grounds and on the old Whig doctrines of civil and religious liberty. He knew and cared for Irish history, though chiefly as furnishing abundant materials for political arguments, but he had no great sympathy with the revival of Irish archæology, and he had no sympathy at all with the project

of extending the Irish language. Though he himself came from an Irish-speaking district and spoke the language with perfect ease, his eminently practical mind regarded the new movement as absurd. The difference of languages, he was accustomed to say, was first introduced into the world as a punishment, and the superior utility of the English tongue as the medium of all modern communication was so great that he saw without regret the gradual disuse of Irish.[1] He spoke warmly of Davis, whose charm and purity of character were as conspicuous as his brilliant talent; he invited Duffy to Darrynane, and in a letter written in October 1844 he disclaimed all hostility to the 'Nation,' and bantered its writers on their excessive susceptibility; but it seems probable that even then he looked on the new school with a little contempt and distrust, perhaps also with a little jealousy of its growing influence.

The Young Irelanders in their turn in their private letters and meetings were accustomed to ridicule the exaggerations, the flattery, the tawdry rhetoric, the constant repetition of a few impressive sentences or metaphors in O'Connell's mob oratory. They resented the manner in which by browbeating or coarse banter, or by the simple exercise of his overwhelming authority, he crushed all opposition in the Conciliation Hall. They resented still more his evident wish to delegate during his long absences his authority to his son John, for whose ability and character they had much contempt; they thought, too, with much reason, that there was some shiftiness in O'Connell's dealings with money; that it was not right that a great revenue raised for public purposes should be practically at the complete

[1] See O'Neill Daunt's *Personal Recollections*, i. 14–15.

disposal of a single man who gave no account of its expenditure.

All these things caused some estrangement, but graver differences were behind. The attitude of the 'Nation,' upholding in its main lines Peel's system of mixed education, was bitterly resented by O'Connell, and in newspapers which supported him the accusation of infidelity began to be raised against the rising party. There appears to have been little or no foundation for the charge, though it is quite true that the Young Irelanders were much less under clerical influence than the great body of the repealers. Several of them, including Davis and Mitchel, were Protestants, and the leading Catholics in the party, though, I believe, of unimpeachable orthodoxy, wrote as politicians, and not as theologians. O'Connell, however, had no right to object to this. He had himself always avowed that his great object was to unite the two creeds on the basis of secular politics, and on the question of the Queen's colleges the 'Nation' was the representative of a large and probably preponderating portion of the educated Catholic laymen, and of a not inconsiderable portion of the priesthood. The subject was introduced into Conciliation Hall. Davis defended the policy of accepting, with some qualifications, the new scheme. O'Connell in his reply treated him with great discourtesy; he declared that the 'Nation' was in no sense the representative of Irish Catholic opinion, and ended by exclaiming in angry tones, 'Young Ireland may play what pranks they please. I do not envy them their name. I shall stand by Old Ireland, and I have some slight notion that Old Ireland will stand by me.'

The quarrel was patched up, and O'Connell afterwards tried by some gracious words to smooth it down, but it left an enduring bitterness behind it. Some of

the younger priests—among others a certain Father Kenyon, who was a man of considerable ability and very violent politics—steadily supported the 'Nation,' but the great body of the priesthood began to look on it with suspicion. Davis showed in his private letters that he felt very doubtful whether he could continue long a member of the Repeal Association, which seemed passing more and more into clerical hands. He complained bitterly of 'the lying, ignorant, and lazy clan who surround O'Connell,' and said that he had a perpetual struggle with himself to prevent him from quitting politics in absolute scorn. Some writers in the 'Nation' threw a little ridicule on the assertion that the acquittal of O'Connell by the Law Lords was of the nature of a miracle. O'Connell wrote that they were, no doubt, entitled to disbelieve this and 'any other miracle from the days of the Apostles to the present,' but they must suffer Catholics to believe it; and he was greatly scandalised because a critic in the 'Nation' expressed much admiration for the poetry of Shelley, who was certainly not an orthodox writer.[1] The Repeal Association was accustomed to purchase large numbers of copies of the 'Nation,' and to send them gratuitously to the repeal reading rooms in districts where more than 10*l.* had been subscribed to the rent. O'Connell now demanded a pledge from the editor that he would submit to all future decisions of the association; and, as this pledge was refused, he gave orders that no more free copies should be sent.

The paper had by this time acquired such a circulation and influence that the measure seems to have done it little harm, and the reading rooms very commonly subscribed for themselves, but it clearly showed the

[1] Duffy's *Young Ireland*, p. 619; *Four Years of Irish History*, p. 104–105.

tension that had arisen. It became greater during the absence of O'Connell, when his son presided over the association and gave it a completely Catholic tone. The understanding that sectarian topics should be excluded from discussion was practically ignored. There were discussions on the relation of the English press to the Holy See; on some internal differences that had arisen among the German Catholics; on the authenticity of the Holy Coat of Treves. Macnevin, who was himself a Catholic, complained that the Repeal Association was now merely a Catholic association.

There was another point on which the two schools of repealers gravely differed, and on this O'Connell was on firmer ground. His complaint could hardly be more tersely expressed than by a witticism ascribed to the great Lord Plunket. One of his friends once found the old Chancellor perusing the columns of the 'Nation' when it first appeared, and asked him what was the *tone* of the new journal. Plunket answered laconically 'Wolfe Tone.' The truth was that it was impossible to read it with candour without perceiving that its whole tendency was to hold up as heroes or models rebels against English rule, to glorify armed rebellion, to stimulate the feelings that produce it. Probably in the earliest stage of the movement the leading members did not clearly foresee such a result, but the tendency soon became unmistakable. O'Connell was certainly not guiltless in this matter. In order to win the applause of his monster meetings he had often used most outrageous and mischievous language about the English nation and the English government of Ireland, but he had almost always been careful to qualify it by declaring that he aimed only at the attainment of constitutional objects through constitutional means, and deprecated every kind of violence. He had no objection to

commemorate the Irish warriors of a remote or legendary past, but he had a lifelong contempt for the rebels of 1798, and contended, with much truth, that but for them the Union could not have been carried. These rebels were now extolled as martyrs in the 'Nation,' and Wolfe Tone, as Lord Plunket said, had become their special hero. There was much talk of a distinct Irish foreign policy, and there were not obscure intimations that help from America and France was hoped for, and that quarrels between those Powers and England were looked on with much satisfaction. An English newspaper had dwelt on the absurdity of a rebellion in a country which, like Ireland, was interlaced with railways, and the 'Nation' replied by an elaborate dissertation on the best means of destroying railways in the event of invasion. 'It might,' said the writer, 'be useful to promulgate through the country, to be read by all repeal wardens in their parishes, a few short and easy rules as to the mode of dealing with railways in case of any enemy daring to make hostile use of them.'[1]

This article was defended by the editor of the 'Nation,' but its author was John Mitchel, to whom the increasing violence of the paper may be largely attributed. Thomas Davis, perhaps the most brilliant, and certainly the most attractive, of the Young Irelanders, died unexpectedly after a short illness, in September 1845, and his removal increased the influence of Mitchel in the party. Mitchel was a man of great, but, I think, exclusively literary, ability, and was, no doubt, honest according to his lights, but he was utterly unpractical and uncompromising, and, like many Irish 'patriots,' his politics amounted to little more than a blind, savage, and stupid hatred of England. After O'Connell's

[1] Duffy's *Life*, i. 140.

death he quarrelled violently with his associates and set up a frantically rebellious paper of his own, which was cut short by his condemnation to penal servitude; but his most abiding influence is to be found in his agrarian policy. Adopting, with little or no acknowledgment, the theories of Lalor, he contended that the true basis of a national struggle in Ireland must be plunder; the seizure without purchase or compensation of all landed property held under English law. By such hopes and incentives alone could a genuine 'National' enthusiasm he aroused.

To men and opinions of this kind O'Connell was utterly opposed. His repeated declarations that he only desired to carry repeal if it could be done without bloodshed or injury to property represented his most genuine feeling, and his horror of rebellion amounted to a passion. The attempt of the Young Irelanders to lay the foundation of an alliance with France and America against England filled him with indignation. He said that, for his own part, he would not accept repeal if it came by the assistance of France, and at a time when the controversy about the Oregon territory threatened a breach with America, he declared, to the intense disgust of the Young Ireland party, that if England conciliated Ireland by a few righteous measures, Ireland would be heart and soul with her in the struggle, and would 'help to bring down the pride of the American Eagle.' He at once denounced Mitchel's railway article, and especially the allusion to the repeal wardens, and when the Government proceeded to prosecute the editor he refused to take any part in his defence. He repeated emphatically that the special and distinctive characteristic of his agitation was that it rested on the belief that every necessary reform could be attained by legal and constitutional means; that

under no circumstances should physical force be resorted to as a remedy for political grievances; that 'no political amelioration is worth one drop of human blood.' The Repeal Association, he said, was a perfectly legal organisation, and he would have no part in any organisation that was not so. When it was first founded it was based on a distinct disclaimer of 'all physical force, violence, or breach of the law.' Its only means of action were to be 'peaceable, legal and constitutional combinations of all classes, sects and persuasions of her Majesty's loyal subjects.' If the Association admitted men who preached the doctrine that physical force might be resorted to, under certain contingencies, to attain its objects, then O'Connell declared, as a lawyer, that the whole Association would be tainted with the guilt of treason and all its members would be liable to prosecution.

The proposition that 'no political amelioration is worth one drop of human blood' could hardly be accepted in its literal sense by anyone except Quakers, and it is not surprising that it was indignantly repudiated in Young Ireland circles. When the party was originally started, most of its members were devoted admirers of O'Connell, and they fully acknowledged him as a great pacific and even religious leader, preaching the doctrines of moral force. As one of their poets wrote:—

I saw him at the hour of prayer, when morning's earliest dawn
Was breaking o'er the mountain tops, o'er grassy dell and lawn.
. . . . . .
His hands were clasped upon his breast, his eye was raised above,
I heard those full and solemn tones in words of faith and love.

He prayed that those who wronged him might forever be
forgiven.
Oh, who would say such prayers as these are not received
in Heaven?
I saw him next amid the best and noblest of our isle—
There was the same majestic form, the same heart-kindling
smile;
But grief was on that princely brow—for others still he
mourned,
He gazed upon poor fettered slaves and his heart within
him burned.
He vowed before the captives' God to break the captives'
chain—
To bind the broken heart and set the bondsmen free again;
And fit he was our chief to be in triumph or in need,
Who never wronged his deadliest foe in thought or word
or deed.

. . . . . .

And many an eye now quailed with shame and many a
cheek now glowed
As he paid them back with words of love for every curse
bestowed.
I thought of his unceasing care, his never-ending zeal;
I heard the watchword burst from all—the gathering cry,
Repeal!—
And as his eyes were raised to Heaven—from whence his
mission came,
He stood amid the thousands there a monarch save in
name!

This was, indeed, an idealised O'Connell, but it was at least a picture of O'Connell as he appeared to some of the early Young Irelanders; and they had their full share in the natural literary tendency to exaggerate the power of the spoken or written word. As Macarthy wrote:—

When the Lord created the earth and the sea,
The stars, and the glorious sun,
The Godhead *spoke*, and the universe woke,
And the mighty work was done!
Let a word be flung from the orator's tongue,
Or a drop from the fearless pen,
And the chains accurst asunder burst
That fettered the minds of men.

Oh! these are the arms with which we fight,
The swords in which we trust,
Which no tyrant hand shall dare to brand,
Which time cannot stain or rust.
When these we bore we triumphed before,
With these we'll triumph again,
And the world shall say no power can stay
The voice or the fearless pen.

But the spirit of Young Ireland was rapidly changing. Its present doctrine was much more truly represented by the lines of Davis:—

The tribune's tongue or poet's pen
May sow the seed in prostrate men,
But 'tis the soldier's sword alone
Can reap the harvest when 'tis grown.

No one, indeed, can read the 'Spirit of the Nation' without perceiving that its writers were appealing habitually to the rebellious and military elements in the country.

In their prose as well as in their poetry the same spirit prevailed. Thus, to take but one instance, their most brilliant rhetorician, Thomas Meagher, declared in one of his speeches,[1] 'There are but two plans for our consideration—the one within the law, the other

[1] Speeches of Thomas F. Meagher (New York), pp. 213, 214.

without the law. Let us take the latter. I will then ask you, is an insurrection practicable? Prove to me that it is, and I for one will vote for it this very night. You know well, my friends, that I am not one of those tame moralists who say that liberty is not worth a drop of blood. Men who subscribe to such a maxim are fit for out-of-door relief, and for nothing better. Against this miserable maxim the noblest virtue that has saved and sanctified humanity appears in judgment. From the blue waters of the Bay of Salamis—from the valley over which the sun stood still and lit the Israelites to victory—from the cathedral in which the sword of Poland has been sheathed in the shroud of Kosciusko—from the convent of St. Isidore, where the fiery hand that rent the ensign of St. George upon the plains of Ulster has crumbled into dust—from the sands of the desert, where the wild genius of the Algerine so long has scared the eagle of the Pyrenees—from the ducal palace in this kingdom, where the memory of the gallant Geraldine enhances more than royal favour the nobility of his race—from the solitary grave within this mute city which a dying request has left without an epitaph—oh! from every spot where heroism has had a sacrifice or a triumph, a voice breaks in upon the cringing crowd that cherishes this maxim, crying out, "Away with it! away with it!"'

O'Connell, on the other hand, lost no opportunity of extolling the maxim which Meagher denounced, and he made it one of his first objects to sunder decisively the Repeal Association from all connection with rebels, and from all responsibility for their words and acts. He answered their heroics about dying for their country with characteristic scorn: 'It is, no doubt, a very fine thing to die for one's country, but believe me, one living patriot is worth a whole churchyard full of dead

ones.' He treated with utter incredulity the declarations of Mitchel and others of the party that they did not contemplate or desire a resort to physical force, and he insisted upon imposing as a test upon the Repeal Association that all its members should, on pain of immediate expulsion, subscribe the 'Peace Resolutions' declaring that physical force and other illegal means must in no case be resorted to for the achievement of their political ends. It was impossible that the Young Ireland party with their antecedents and their teaching could accept such a test, and they were accordingly compelled to secede from the Repeal Association.

The conduct of O'Connell during this struggle seems to me to show no weakness or indecision, but it was the belief of the Young Irelanders that it was dictated to him by his son John, who, with none of his father's ability, had much of his father's ambition, and who was at bitter enmity with them. There is probably some portion of truth in this, for O'Connell was visibly aged, and when his quarrel with the Young Irelanders culminated, at the end of July 1846, he was within a few months of his death. He died of softening of the brain, and a very competent medical authority declared that it must have begun at least two years before the end.

From the time of the secession he could reckon on nothing but hostility from Young Ireland. In Sir Gavan Duffy's history of these years, O'Connell always appears as half-patriot, half-charlatan—a man of amazing abilities, sincerely devoted to his people and his creed, and in many respects in advance of his time, but untruthful, rapacious, unscrupulous, overbearing, very rarely acting through motives that were purely single-minded and disinterested.

The correspondence which Gavan Duffy has pub-

lished shows how widely this estimate was adopted by other members of the party. The 'Nation' was now constantly hostile, and after O'Connell's death, and before he was yet laid in his Irish grave, a remarkable appreciation of him, written by Father Kenyon, appeared in its columns, describing him as a *grand homme manqué*. Mitchel afterwards pronounced him to have been, next to the British Government, the greatest enemy Ireland ever had, for it was owing to his abiding influence that the insurrection of 1848 ended in an absurd and contemptible failure, and in his 'Jail Journal' he has drawn a very characteristic portrait of his former leader. 'Poor old Dan! wonderful, mighty, jovial and mean old man! with silver tongue and smile of witchery and heart of melting ruth! lying tongue! smile of treachery! heart of unfathomable fraud! What a royal yet vulgar soul, with the keen eye and potent swoop of a generous eagle of Cairn Tual—with the base servility of a hound, and the cold cruelty of a spider! Think of his speech for John Magee, the most powerful forensic achievement since before Demosthenes, and then think of the "gorgeous and gossamer" theory of moral and peaceful agitation, the most astounding *organon* of public swindling since first man bethought him of obtaining money under false pretences. And after one has thought of all this and more, what then can a man say? What but pray that Irish earth may lie light on O'Connell's breast, and that the good God who knew how to create so wondrous a creature may have mercy upon his soul.'[1]

Duffy has collected many instances of the sympathy that was shown from many quarters for the Young Ire-

[1] *Jail Journal*, p. 157.

landers during their struggle with O'Connell, and of his declining popularity. There were large secessions from the Repeal Association, and many of the repeal wardens threw up their post. But when all this is said, it is tolerably plain that the old leader carried with him the great body of the Irish Catholics. The overwhelming majority of the priesthood were behind him, and they had not lost their power. Bishop after bishop denounced the Voltairian or infidel tendencies of the new party. Some of its leaders were mobbed, and the coal porters of Dublin who were among O'Connell's most devoted followers constantly disturbed their meetings. After O'Connell's death the popular indignation against the Young Irelanders grew still stronger. 'The physical force men,' wrote Lord Clarendon in 1847, 'whenever they meet for spouting have to be escorted home by two or three hundred police, or not one of them would escape alive from the moral persuasion party, who miss no opportunity of getting up a ferocious row. 'Moral persuasion always waylays physical force and beats it within an inch of its life.'' [1] The Young Irelanders were accused of having murdered O'Connell; in the election of 1847 they were almost uniformly defeated at the poll, and some of them scarcely escaped the fury of the mob.[2] The ignominious, but happily bloodless, issue of the abortive rebellion of 1848 was, as Mitchel truly said, mainly due to the action of the priests who themselves acted upon the teaching of O'Connell, though something must also be attributed to the absolute ineptitude of the Young Ireland leaders, who issued furious rhetorical addresses urging the people to resistance, discussed their plans openly in newspaper columns, but made no

[1] Laughton's *Life of Henry Reeve*, i. 186, 187.
[2] See a graphic picture in Duffy's *Life*, i. 209.

preparation whatever for arming and organising rebellion or securing leaders of the smallest military ability. Some 40,000 excellently equipped British soldiers were in Ireland, prepared to repress the outbreak when it came. A few Irish policemen proved amply sufficient for the task.

To return, however, to the divisions between O'Connell and the Young Ireland party, there was one other capital difference between them. It was no less than the continuance of the repeal agitation. When O'Connell was released from prison he found the nation wound up to the wildest enthusiasm both for himself and for repeal. It was impossible for him at such a moment to recede, even if he had wished it, and as long as Peel was at the head of a powerful ministry, it is hardly likely that he wished altogether to do so. As we have seen, however, he carefully abstained from pushing forward the agitation or even from improving the advantages which his legal triumph had given him. He still, as was usual with him, used language calculated to flatter all the hopes of the people. He still professed himself an ardent repealer. He urged that no person who was not a repealer should be returned to Parliament. He declared that a party of sixty to seventy repealers would be irresistible in the House of Commons. He wrote a public letter in which he assured the Whigs that the rule excluding all Liberals from Irish constituencies unless they took the repeal pledge would never be relaxed. He even warned Sheil, who had now definitely severed himself from the movement, that neither his great services nor his brilliant talents would save him from expulsion from his seat at Dungarvan unless he returned to his former alliance.[1]

[1] Duffy's *Four Years of Irish History*, pp. 30–32.

Did O'Connell sincerely mean all this? The question has been much discussed, but there can, I think, be no doubt that he at least desired a strong distinctive parliamentary party attached to himself, and gladly maintained the repeal cry as long as it was necessary for that purpose. It is also true that his relations to Peel were such that he could expect no favour in that quarter, and as long as Peel's Government seemed destined for a long and powerful career, his attitude was certain to be hostile. It is, I think, scarcely less doubtful that O'Connell's belief was shaken, and as soon as there was some prospect of the Whigs returning to office there were clear signs that he was longing to revive his policy of 1834, when he adjourned indefinitely the agitation for repeal, allied himself openly with the Whig government, supported it with all his power, and exercised a great influence over its patronage.

His motives must always be in some degree a matter of conjecture, and were probably very mixed; but it is not, I think, difficult to divine the most important. A man so sagacious and so practical must have seen that the attempt to force repeal by great popular demonstrations, though it had been tried on the largest scale in 1843, had completely failed, and that if repeal ever came it was not likely to be in his lifetime. The sanguine temperament which had supported him through many vicissitudes was gone, and it was replaced by the despondency of an old and sickly man. He was conscious of failing powers and of approaching death, and he probably looked with just alarm to the future. He had, indeed, created in a great, organised, political priesthood the power on which he chiefly relied for the government of Ireland; but the dissensions which were breaking out among his following, the growing strength of the revolutionary party, the predatory doctrines

about landed property that were fermenting around him, and the total absence among his disciples of any man of commanding capacity, all betokened a period of anarchy and convulsion when he had gone. His career was closing in utter failure. Repeal, which he had so confidently promised, had not come. He had hoped to win to his cause the rank and property of the country, and to unite with the Catholics on a national basis at least the more moderate section of the Protestants. But he had totally failed. The natural leaders of the people, the classes who had opposed the Union in 1800, the great body of moderate Protestants who had steadily supported Catholic Emancipation up to 1829, had all been alienated by the repeal agitation. Not by his wish, but certainly through his policy, the fissures in Irish life had become deeper than ever.

He was weary of the whole concern and would gladly have fled from it. He was personally on good terms with the Whig leaders and strongly disposed to act with them. As far back as September 1843, at a time when the repeal agitation was at its height, he wrote a very curious letter to Lord Campbell, with whom he was always on friendly terms, in which that acute lawyer clearly saw a distant overture to an alliance. The repeal agitation, he said, whatever might be its other effects, had at least made Englishmen of all parties conscious of the grievances of Ireland, and he asked why the Whig leaders did not rise to the level of the time, and, by proposing a definite plan for redressing these grievances, prepare the way for conciliating the Irish and strengthening the Empire. 'Why does not Lord John treat us to a magniloquent epistle declaratory of his determination to abate the Church nuisance in Ireland, to augment our popular franchise, to vivify our new corporations, to mitigate the statute law as

between landlord and tenant, to strike off a few more rotten boroughs in England, and to give the representatives to our great counties?'[1] In the following year, in reply to a letter from Charles Buller, he said that he would not speak for himself, but that religious equality, a restoration of the law of landlord and tenant to its state before the Union, an absentee tax, and a strengthening of the popular element in the constituencies and the corporations, would satisfy many of his followers and 'mitigate the present ardent desire for repeal.'[2]

The Whigs were not altogether irresponsive. Lord John Russell had been prominent in censuring the circumstances of O'Connell's trial. He made a speech in the beginning of 1844 in which he intimated his desire to see a complete equality established between Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterians.[3] On the great question of the repeal of the Union I do not believe that he ever really wavered; but there were rumours that the notion of a subordinate federal parliament was at this time seriously discussed in the Whig councils, and that they looked with some favour on the proposal to hold sessions of the Imperial Parliament occasionally in Dublin.[4] They certainly supported O'Connell's opposition to the Queen's colleges in a manner that did them no credit. If by a new alliance O'Connell could obtain from the Whigs some substantial concession to Ireland, he might still terminate his career in the sunshine of success, and if he could leave the Irish populace as well disposed to an English Government as it had been to the Government of Lord Melbourne, the dangers of impending revolution might be averted.

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 307–309.

[2] Walpole's *Life of Russell*, i. 395–396.

[3] Greville, v. 234. This was to be effected by endowing the priesthood.

[4] See a note by Fitzpatrick, ii. 309, 310.

This policy beyond all others was dreaded by the Young Irelanders. As O'Connell drew back, they pressed on with more uncompromising vehemence. They treated the suspension of the agitation during the years that followed 1834 as a crime, and they pointed out indignantly how many who had followed O'Connell at that time had accepted office under the Crown. Sir James Graham, in a speech which he made in 1841, mentioned that out of the forty members (including tellers) who supported O'Connell's repeal motion in the House of Commons in 1834, and who might have been regarded as the most uncompromising opponents of English parties, no less than seven had since then accepted lucrative offices, while the leader himself had been offered high position under the Crown.[1] This, according to the Young Irelanders, was the canker which was fatally corroding the repeal party. They urged that the true policy of that party should be to keep itself absolutely independent of English parties, or at least only to enter into temporary alliances for purely Irish purposes; they desired an Irish party which should sit in the British House of Commons not for the purpose of supporting, but rather of opposing the interests of the Empire, of dislocating or obstructing the whole machine in the interests of their Irish policy.[2] Above all, they insisted that every repeal member should solemnly bind himself to accept no office of emolument under the Crown.

O'Connell replied that he had spent many of the best years of his life in removing the disqualifications which shut out Catholics from Parliament and from office, and that he certainly was not going to impose a

[1] *Annual Register*, 1841, p. 41.

[2] See on the growth of this policy Duffy's *Four Years of Irish History*, pp. 65, 68, 435, 436, 485–488.

new disqualification excluding those who agreed with him from all places of emolument and influence in the administration of their country. The more offices, he said, were held by such men the better it would be for Ireland and for her cause. He expressed some regret at the secession of the Young Irelanders from the Repeal Association, and consented to receive a deputation with a view to reconciliation. Three prominent Young Irelanders accordingly visited him, supported, as they said, by letters from forty districts where secessions had taken place, and by instructions from more than one Young Ireland meeting, and with a long series of conditions on which they were willing to return. Their language was that of men dictating terms to a vanquished opponent. If they imagined that such a tone would succeed with O'Connell, even in his failing state, they were grossly deceived. He listened to them for a time in patience, and then with a fierce flash of indignation dismissed them from his presence. There must, he said, now be an utter end of these negotiations. The Association will pursue its own path in total disregard of the machinations and movements of the Little Ireland gang. 'I set them at defiance. Let them keep up as many dissensions as they please, I shall still disregard them. . . . . I would rather see the Association emptied to the last man than submit to their dictation.'[1]

In the meantime the Government of Peel, which seemed but a short time before so overwhelming in its strength, had fallen on the question of the Corn Laws. In December 1845 Peel resigned, and Lord John Russell was called to power. He could only command the support of a minority in the House of Commons, but

[1] Duffy's *Life*, i. 192.

O'Connell lost no time in giving him the most efficacious assistance by a speech in which he clearly intimated that the Irish repeal members were prepared to support him. Nothing, he said, but repeal would ultimately cure the evils of Ireland, but if Lord John Russell would bring in some measure for the benefit of Ireland—such as advancing money to construct railways on which the people could be employed, improving the tenure of land, and restoring the magistrates dismissed by Peel—he would have the cordial support of the Irish members. If these things were done, O'Connell said, Lord John would become so popular that he would have 'to transfer his green cap to him.'

The attempt to form a Whig ministry at this time failed, owing partly to the refusal of Lord Grey to serve in a Cabinet in which Lord Palmerston was Foreign Secretary, and partly to the attitude of Peel who declined to promise any cordial support. Peel came back for a few months to office, and to the profound injury of English party government himself carried the repeal of the Corn Laws which he had so long and so strenuously opposed. O'Connell's speech had, however, clearly defined his policy towards the Whigs and placed him in violent opposition to the advanced party in Ireland. After a short respite of about six months the Government of Peel fell in June 1846, and it is a significant fact that it fell ostensibly on an Irish question. The general failure of the potato crop in the late autumn of 1845 was soon followed by an appalling famine, and in the scenes of misery that ensued it is not surprising that agrarian crime, which was always smouldering in the country, should have burst out anew. Murders, incendiary fires, and all the accustomed forms of agrarian crime multiplied with frightful

rapidity,[1] and a new Crimes Bill of extreme but perhaps not unnecessary severity was introduced. O'Connell violently opposed it, contending that a law of fixity of tenure and a repeal of recent statutes facilitating ejection should first be carried. The measure, whether right or wrong, was soon made the platform of a party conflict. The Whigs, combining with the followers of O'Connell and with the Tories who had seceded under Disraeli on the Corn Law question, threw out the Bill, drove Peel from power, and placed Lord John Russell once more in office.

This was probably, in truth, a misfortune to Ireland, for the most ghastly page of modern Irish history had now opened. A change of ministry in the midst of a gigantic famine is seldom a benefit, and however great may have been the political shortcomings of Sir Robert Peel, however tardy and inadequate may have been the measures with which he combated the famine in its earlier stages, he was at least intimately acquainted with the country, and far superior in administrative capacity to the men who succeeded him. It is difficult to believe that if he had continued in office some at least of the mistakes of the two appalling years that were to follow would not have been avoided.

The problem to be dealt with, indeed, was one of the most terrible English statesmen had ever to encoun-

[1] 'In the course of that autumn [1845] ten counties of Ireland were in a state of anarchy; and mainly in that period there were 136 homicides committed, 138 houses burned, 483 houses attacked, and 138 fired into; there were 544 cases of aggravated assault and 551 of robbery of arms; there were 89 cases of bands appearing in arms; there were more than 200 cases of administering unlawful oaths, and there were 1,944 cases of sending threatening letters. By the end of the year the general crimes of Ireland had doubled in amount and enormity compared with the preceding year.' Disraeli's *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 136.

ter. It was to deal with what Lord John Russell truly called a thirteenth century famine in a nineteenth century population. The sole food on which vast masses of the people lived had failed, and before the year 1845 had closed, or at least in the earlier months of the ensuing year, there was literal starvation in countless cabins. Ireland had then a population considerably exceeding eight millions; living almost entirely on the soil and for the most part on the barest necessaries of life, and even in normal times there were months of the year in which it was only with great difficulty that multitudes of them could procure those necessaries. Their farms were so small that in an immense proportion of cases they were insufficient to furnish them with food for the year; there was very little independent agricultural labour, and that little was largely paid not in money but in kind. The result was that cottiers and labourers had no money to buy food if it was brought into their neighbourhood; they were almost wholly without enterprise and industrial qualities; they lived in a poor country, nearly destitute in three provinces of manufacturing industry; a great part of the wealthier landlords were habitual absentees, and most of the resident landlords were already plunged in debt and were soon crushed to the very dust by the overwhelming pressure of the new poor law. Time was pressing, for the old potatoes were rapidly coming to an end, and most of the later crop was hopelessly diseased.

Almost the only redeeming circumstance was that the corn crops, and especially the oats, had been unusually abundant. The Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century had more than once in times of distress prohibited the export of corn, and the same course had been frequently taken on the Continent.[1] It was loudly

[1] See Peel's *Memoirs*, ii. 188, 189.

called for in Ireland, but it was one which no English minister was likely to propose, and no British Parliament to accept. Distress, though not amounting to absolute famine, was very severe in many parts of Great Britain, and the corn trade from Ireland could not be dispensed with. 'I have no confidence,' wrote Peel, 'in such remedies as the prohibition of exports or the stoppage of distilleries. The removal of the impediments to import is the only effectual remedy.' It was unfortunately determined, after long hesitation and much division of opinion, that this remedy should not be applied at once by a royal proclamation followed by an Act of Indemnity, but by a regular Act of Parliament, and this involved a long struggle which was not completed till the June of 1846, some eight months after the famine had begun. Under the Indian system of administration famines of a still more gigantic magnitude had been often admirably combated by skilled administrators, but Ireland was ruled under the conditions of party and parliamentary governments, and very few administrators of the Indian type were to be found. The long deferred opening of the ports no doubt brought some relief to Ireland, but there were bitter complaints that by destroying the corn trade to England free trade deprived her of one of her chief permanent sources of wealth; nor have the political economists ever succeeded in convincing the Irish people that it was a right thing that whole fleets laden with food should have been suffered to sail to England from the Irish coast at a time when the Irish people were in the throes of famine.

O'Connell early realised that the calamity which was impending was something much graver than the partial failure of the potatoes which so often occurs in Ireland. On October 28, 1845, he brought the matter

before the Dublin Corporation and stated his plans. He did not ask that the export of corn to England should be stopped, but he contended that it should not be allowed to foreign countries; that distillation and brewing should be prohibited till the famine had disappeared; that the ports should be thrown open and rice and Indian corn largely imported from the colonies, and that in each county machinery should be established for carrying out relief. Large sums would be required to meet the emergency, and they should be raised by a tax of 50, or, as he afterwards said, 20 per cent. on the rental of absentee, and of 10 per cent. on those of resident proprietors, and by a loan of a million and a half raised on the security of the Irish woods and forests. He urged also that the railways and any other public works of real utility that had been projected and authorised by Acts of Parliament should be pressed on as quickly as possible in order to give employment to the people.[1]

These views were brought before Lord Heytesbury, the Lord Lieutenant in Peel's Government, by a deputation of which O'Connell, the Duke of Leinster, Lord Cloncurry and the Lord Mayor formed part, but they received only a formal and dilatory reply. Much time was wasted in a further inquiry by two English experts which led to no practical result, and most of the proposed remedies were put aside. Sir Robert Peel relied mainly on his own great scheme of abolishing the Corn Laws and thus opening the Irish ports to the free importation of corn, but he also carried some other measures of real though certainly very inadequate relief. 100,000*l.* was expended in bringing Indian corn from America, and a relief commission was created which

[1] O'Rourke's *History of the Irish Famine*, pp. 53–55.

established depôts of food in many parts of the country. A public works Bill was carried, and additional powers were granted to the grand juries to raise money for employing the destitute. About half a million was advanced from the Imperial exchequer for these purposes, half of it being a free grant, and the other half a loan. The fever which already followed the famine was met by the establishment of fever hospitals in the neighbourhood of the workhouses, and a few other minor measures were taken. It was computed that up to August 1846 the Government had expended on relief in Ireland 733,372*l.*, of which 368,000*l.* was in loans and the remainder in free grants, and that in this month 97,000 persons were employed in Ireland on public works.[1]

Before this time, however, the responsibility of affairs had passed out of the hands of Peel, who had announced in the Commons his resignation on June 27. By a striking coincidence his defeat in the Commons took place on the same night on which the repeal of the Corn Laws had been carried in the Lords.

O'Connell had been longing for the Whig triumph, and he at once gave his full support to the new ministry. Four Irish members had taken office under it, including Sheil, the most brilliant orator, and Wyse, who was one of the most useful and respected among the Irish representatives. It was the first object of the Young Irelanders to drive these men out of Irish politics, and they specially concentrated their efforts in hostility to Sheil, who held an insecure seat at Dungarvan. They had no difficulty in showing that O'Connell was bound by his earlier language to do so, but he never

[1] See Trevelyan's *Irish Crisis;* O'Rourke's *History of the Irish Famine;* W. P. O'Brien's *The Great Famine.*

suffered himself to be greatly embarrassed by past utterances, and, without withdrawing anything he had said, he contrived by calculated delays and adroit management to prevent any opposition, and Sheil was returned without a contest. In a speech in the Conciliation Hall O'Connell proclaimed his adhesion to his old policy. He was still a repealer; he would never be content till repeal and complete equality were granted to the Irish people. 'Repeal and no compromise' was now, as formerly, his policy. He was determined to bring repeal very speedily before Parliament. But, having said all this to persuade his audience of his consistency, he proceeded to warn them against vexatious and useless opposition to the Government, and he detailed no less than eleven measures for alleviating the state of Ireland, which, he believed, the Whig Government would look upon with favour, and which he desired to see carried before the repeal question was revived. These measures, which would give ample employment to a long ministry, included an extension of the franchise, an increase of the Irish representation, the substitution of elective bodies for the grand juries, and a heavy absentee tax. It was probably partly in order to drive all opposition out of the Repeal Association that he at this time pressed on so vehemently the peace resolutions and forced the Young Irelanders to secede. He assured the Government, as Greville tells us, that as they had assisted him to reject the Coercion Bill of Peel, he would give them any assistance he could in repressing outrage and restoring peace; and Greville adds: 'He carries the priests entirely with him, who appear to have all determined against the violent party'—that is, the party of the Young Irelanders.

In his private letters he made no kind of secret of his alliance with the Government, and showed all his

old keen interest in the bestowal of patronage. He congratulated himself that he had succeeded in 'stifling all opposition to Sheil at Dungarvan.' He is delighted that Wyse and the O'Conor Don and O'Ferrall are in office. He, on the whole, approves of the appointment of Redington as Under-Secretary for Ireland. He had been 'working in an under-channel for Monahan,' the new Attorney-General. He suggested several other legal appointments; his son Morgan obtained a place of 1,200*l.* a year; one of his sons-in-law was made resident magistrate, and the repeal magistrates who had been dismissed in the last administration were restored. 'I have difficulties enough to encounter,' he said, 'to keep the repeal party within bounds.' He would not hesitate 'to place the question of the Protestant Church in abeyance, but then something must be done respecting education and touching the "infidel" colleges before Parliament rises.'[1]

The Young Irelanders were certainly not far astray when they contended that all the promises of independent opposition and inexorable devotion to the repeal policy which were made in the palmy days of the Peel Ministry were vanishing into thin air. But without O'Connell and the priests they could do nothing, and in spite of the eloquent writings in the 'Nation' they were reduced to mere impotent rage. Political wrangles seemed, indeed, a hideous mockery in the midst of the great and overwhelming calamity of the famine. The potato crop had again failed, and the failure was both earlier and more complete than in the previous year, while at the same time the corn harvest was far below that of 1845. In July the prospect of the potatoes seemed very flourishing, but the first week of

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 375–380; Duffy's *Four Years of Irish History*.

August had scarcely passed before nearly the whole crop was irretrievably blighted. During the last half of 1846 the famine and the deadly fever that accompanied it were at their height, and the death wail that arose from Ireland continued with but little abatement through the whole succeeding year.

With the history of this most awful period I am not here concerned, except so far as it bears on the last sad months of O'Connell's life. Familiar as he was with one of the poorest parts of Ireland, he was pierced to the heart by the misery around him, and he did all in his power to alleviate it. In his own county he was indefatigable in obtaining grand jury presentments and setting up public works for the employment of the starving poor, and he warned the Government that there was no exaggeration in the accounts of the failure of the potato and that the great task of feeding a nation must be undertaken without delay. He complained bitterly of the delays in carrying out the Government measures when the people were starving by thousands, and he urged, with much good sense, that not less than a million should be at once placed under the control of the Lord Lieutenant, to be employed at his discretion without the necessity of referring on each occasion to England.[1]

A few fragments from his letters give the best and truest picture of his feelings. 'It would be the absurdest of all absurd things,' he wrote to his friend Fitzpatrick, 'to think of a tribute in such times as these. They are, indeed, more awful than you have any notion of. All our thoughts are engrossed with the two topics—endeavouring to keep the people from outbreaks and endeavouring to get food for them. May

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 383–387.

the great God in His infinite mercy mitigate the calamity and avert the danger.' 'A nation,' he wrote in December, 'is starving. If there be any exceptions, they are so few that they are not worth mentioning. To the all-prevalent famine is now superadded dysentery and typhus in their worst shape.' His own strength was rapidly failing, yet he went over to London in February 1847, to plead the case of Ireland before Parliament; but the impressions he formed there were of the gloomiest kind. 'The prospect of substantial and comprehensive relief from Parliament is, in my judgment, daily diminishing. There is, to be sure, a great deal of sympathy and good feeling both in and out of the House, and generally a very sincere desire that something efficient should be done to relieve the horrible sufferings of the people of Ireland; but there are also many obstacles, and an unwillingness to place upon the British people the burdens absolutely necessary to give efficient relief. . . . There is abundant individual humanity and charity. The noblest generosity is evinced by multitudes of the English. . . . I am afraid of not finding words sufficient to express my strong and lively sense of English humanity. If the exhibition of these qualities by individuals could save Ireland in her present misery, we should be saved. But there is . . . . but little prospect of substantial relief on that enormously large scale which is absolutely necessary to prevent hundreds of thousands of the Irish people from perishing of famine and pestilence. The Government measures, as far as they go, are good, and their intention to relieve by those measures is apparent; but the measures themselves are not of half-sufficient magnitude.' 'The people of Ireland are perishing in shoals; they are perishing by the most frightful species of death. If individual generosity could save a

nation, British generosity would do so now; but it is impossible without the bountiful hand of Parliament, and the disposition to the bounty of the Parliament, appears to be extremely limited.' Lord George Bentinck's scheme for spending sixteen millions on Irish railways, though emanating from the Opposition, and liable, as he confessed, to serious objections, seemed to O'Connell the best that was proposed.[1] It was probably that which would have done most permanent good to Ireland, though the difficulty of making it largely available for the immediate and pressing necessity would have been very great.

Disraeli has given a striking and touching picture of O'Connell as he appeared for the last time in the House of Commons—an old, feeble, broken-hearted man, murmuring amid the deep silence of the House a few pathetic words which were only audible to those who were near him: 'Ireland is in your hands, in your power. If you do not save her she cannot save herself. I solemnly call on you to recollect that I predict with the sincerest conviction that a quarter of her population will perish unless you come to her relief.'[2] The hand of death was upon him, and the change that had passed over him impressed all who saw him. In England, at least, old rancour and party spirit were forgotten at the spectacle of so great a sorrow. He was listened to with an almost reverential silence, and followed by many evidences of pity and of respect. Statesmen of all parties testified their sympathy by their inquiries. Lord Shrewsbury, whom he had once so violently abused, was indefatigable in his kindness, and it is worthy of notice that among the shamrocks that were sent him on his last St. Patrick's Day was one from a

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. [2] Cusack, ii. 212.

leading member of the great Protestant house of Beresford. Some of the fiercest conflicts of his early life had been with that house, yet in spite of all this there had been friendly relations between them which were equally creditable to both parties. The Queen, with a graceful kindness that should never be forgotten, sent to ask after the dying agitator. Another visit he received in those last dark days which he may have valued still more—three of the Oxford converts to Rome came to assure him that it was his career that had first directed their attention to the theology of his Church.

Religion was indeed now the only solace of his mind. Frederick Lucas, who disliked him and who was sceptical about the gravity of his illness, wrote at this time to John O'Hagan, 'I have seen O'Connell. He is really ill and *supposes himself* to be gradually breaking up. He attends to politics no more than is absolutely necessary, and spends every vacant moment in prayer and spiritual reading.'[1] Dr. Miley, an excellent Catholic priest who was sincerely devoted to him, and who was his chief comfort in his last days, fully corroborated the picture: 'Prayer,' he said, 'is his only occupation. It is at once most edifying and affecting to witness his demeanour in this respect, not alone by day but by night also. He is perfectly prepared for death, and had rather not be diverted from the thought of it.' His physicians having ordered him abroad, he resolved to draw his last breath near the tombs of the Apostles in that great city which is the metropolis of his Church. The deep melancholy which had fallen upon him attended him on that dreary journey. 'He seemed,' said one who visited him in France, 'to be a continued prey to sad reflections. His face

[1] Duffy's *Life*, i. 208.

had grown thin, and his look proclaimed an inexpressible sadness: the head hung upon the breast, and the entire person of the invalid, formerly so imposing, was greatly weighed down.'

It is impossible to doubt that the awful tragedies in Ireland contributed largely to this melancholy, yet it would appear from the letters of Dr. Miley as if in his last days all thoughts of Ireland and of public affairs had vanished from his mind. In this respect O'Connell's closing scene is a great contrast to that of Grattan. 'By day and by night,' wrote Miley, 'nothing will he ever hear or speak or think of for a moment but his own maladies and misfortunes.' The Church was now to him all in all. He could scarcely bear to lose sight of a priest: 'Since his illness commenced his thoughts have been entirely absorbed by religion'; his mental agitations were terrible to witness, and he followed the rites of his faith with a trembling but most passionate fervour.[1] His strength failed him when he arrived at Genoa, and in that city he expired on May 15, 1847.

He bequeathed his body to Ireland and his heart to the Eternal City. The former rests in the cemetery of Glasnevin, in the vicinity of Dublin; the latter near the tomb of Lascaris, in the Church of St. Agatha, at Rome.

There is something almost awful in so dark a close of so brilliant a career. The more I dwell upon the subject the more I am convinced of the splendour and originality of the genius and of the reality of the patriotism of O'Connell, in spite of the animosities that surround his memory and the many and grievous faults

[1] Fitzpatrick, ii. 413; Maccabe's *Last Days of O'Connell*, pp. 87–91.

that obscured his life. But when to the great services he rendered to his country we oppose the sectarian and class warfare that resulted from his policy, the fearful elements of discord and turbulence he evoked, and which he alone could in some degree control, it may be questioned whether his life was a blessing or a curse to Ireland.

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